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**SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO (SAIC) PRESENTS  
“TOUCH AND GO: RAY YOSHIDA AND HIS SPHERES OF INFLUENCE”  
NOV. 13, 2010 – FEB. 12, 2011 AT THE SULLIVAN GALLERIES**

Curated by SAIC Faculty Member John Corbett and Jim Dempsey

Special Preview Reception Friday, Nov. 12 from 6 to 8 p.m. is Free and Open to the Public

First Large-Scale Show in Chicago Since Artist's Death Examines His Works in Relation to His Years at SAIC

CHICAGO — The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) proudly presents the exhibition “Touch and Go: Ray Yoshida and His Spheres of Influence,” opening Saturday, Nov. 13, 2010 and running through Saturday, Feb. 12, 2011 at SAIC’s critically acclaimed Sullivan Galleries (33 S. State Street). Over the course of a half-century, Yoshida (1930–2009, SAIC class of 1953) was one of the most vital American artistic figures to emerge from the Midwest.

The 135-work “Touch and Go” exhibition at SAIC is the largest and most extensive gathering of works ever devoted to Yoshida’s influential career as a painter and collage maker. It is also the first large-scale show in Chicago since the artist’s death in 2009, and will comprehensively examine his oeuvre and its relation to his life at SAIC as a professor, student, and colleague. In collaboration with SAIC’s Department of Exhibitions/Exhibition Studies and its Executive Director Mary Jane Jacob, the exhibition is guest curated by SAIC faculty member John Corbett and Jim Dempsey.

Sullivan Galleries hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., and admission is always free and open to the public. A special preview reception, free and open to the public, will be held Friday, Nov. 12 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Sullivan Galleries. For more information, call 312.629.6635 or visit [saic.edu/exhibitions](http://saic.edu/exhibitions).

Additionally, a concurrent presentation of Yoshida’s work will be on view in the Art Institute of Chicago’s Modern Wing from Nov. 12, 2010 to May 8, 2011, in the first collaboration between SAIC’s Department of Exhibitions/Exhibition Studies and the Art Institute of Chicago’s Department of Contemporary Art.

“Ray Yoshida’s career is an integral storyline in Chicago art,” note exhibition curators **John Corbett** and **Jim Dempsey**. “Yoshida was encouraged by his professors to ‘do his own thing,’ to search for what it was that made him tick, rather than follow the path of a movement or group. In turn, that’s how Yoshida advised his pupils. This is a classic part of the Chicago sensibility: to push yourself and develop your own unique identity. Although the Imagists—many of whom studied with Yoshida—were exhibited as groups such as The Hairy Who?, The False Image, and The Non-Plussed Some, they were comprised of fiercely individualistic artists. This is part of Yoshida’s legacy and an aspect that the show seeks to convey.”

“This exhibition affords a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the life and work of Ray Yoshida, an exceptional teacher who delivered decades of insight into the nature of representation,” notes **Lisa Wainwright**, SAIC Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty. “In addition, Yoshida was an important, ground-breaking artist who combined exquisite craft with a commitment to the inventive admixture of high-art and popular culture.”

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The core of this exhibition is a retrospective of Yoshida’s art featuring many works from the artist’s estate and seldom-seen pieces culled from a range of private and institutional collections. On view are his rarely displayed early works on paper from Yoshida’s pre-Imagist period, shortly after he obtained a BFA from SAIC in 1953. This exhibition also brings to light both Yoshida’s early comic collages of the late 1960s, which became one of the artist’s signature discoveries, and his later return to this method, as seen in the monumental *EWWWWW! AAAHHH! AAWOOOOOO!* (2002–2003). Also included are his beloved abstractions of the 1970s, as well as selections from Yoshida’s “bathrobe” period, highlighted by Yoshida’s famous painting *Jizz & Jazz* (1971). Furthermore, his figurative works from the 1980s—including *Touch and Go*, which lends its name to this show—are featured, alongside his remarkable late oil paintings in which Yoshida introduced cars and cloud-like forms.

Parallel to the retrospective, the exhibition features additional works by Yoshida’s colleagues, students, and teachers. While the show comprises a chronological survey of Yoshida’s art, it departs from convention, as Yoshida did in life, by highlighting several major spheres of influence: his teachers at SAIC Kathleen Blackshear and Paul Wiegardt; his SAIC colleagues Ted Halkin, Whitney Halstead, Miyoko Ito, Thomas Kapsalis and Evelyn Statsinger; his contemporaries William Copley, Öyvind Fahlström, and Peter Saul; self-taught artists Martin Ramirez and Joseph Yoakum; and his SAIC students Mark Booth, Roger Brown, Brian Calvin, Sarah Canright, Jordan Davies, Ed Flood, Art Green, Philip Hanson, Richard Hull, Jim Nutt, Christina Ramberg, Suellen Rocca, Barbara Rossi, William Schwedler, Rebecca Shore, Chris Ware, Karl Wirsum, and Mary Lou Zelazny, among others.

Yoshida’s central place as an artist and fellow traveler is seen in relation to his students. Importantly, he played an essential role in introducing younger members of the Chicago Imagist exhibition groups to unfamiliar materials, including comics, folk art, and non-Western art. Yet, as Yoshida certainly influenced many of his students, he also remained open to their contributions in dialogue. Many teachers retain a master-apprentice relationship, but Yoshida came to consider his pupils as colleagues. This exhibition offers a chance to look at the give-and-take, the “touch and go,” of this remarkable artist’s generous and voracious exchange with the artists that surrounded him. Thus, “Touch and Go” is not only a retrospective of Yoshida’s work, but also an historical investigation of the special kind of pedagogical relationships that were part of the Chicago art experience in the 1950s and 1960s.

Assistant curator for “Touch and Go” is Kate Zeller, SAIC Department of Exhibitions/Exhibition Studies. This exhibition is supported in part by Ruth Horwich, Cleve Carney, and the Estate of Ray Yoshida.

### Exhibition Calendar Listing

#### **Touch and Go: Ray Yoshida and his Spheres of Influence**

School of the Art Institute of Chicago Sullivan Galleries, 33 S. State Street

Reception: Friday, Nov. 12, 2010 6 – 8 p.m.

Exhibition runs Nov. 13, 2010 through Feb. 12, 2011. Public Gallery hours are Tuesday – Saturday, 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Free admission

Over the course of a half-century, Ray Yoshida (1930–2009, SAIC class of 1953) was one of the most vital American artistic figures to emerge from the Midwest. His singular importance is due both to his artwork and his position as an educator and colleague at SAIC. Curated by SAIC faculty member John Corbett and Jim Dempsey, this exhibition will be the first to examine Yoshida’s oeuvre and its relation to his life at SAIC, while placing it historically at the crucial juncture of mid-century Chicago that saw a transition from an expressionist orientation to a pop idiom.

The core of the exhibition is a retrospective of Yoshida’s art featuring works from the artist’s estate and rarely seen pieces culled from a range of private and institutional collections. Parallel to the retrospective, additional works by colleagues and students consider Yoshida’s work in relation to formative influences, influences from contemporary colleagues and the open dialogue between Yoshida and his students. For more information, please call 312.629.6635 or visit [saic.edu/exhibitions](http://saic.edu/exhibitions). For more information about the concurrent presentation of Yoshida’s work at the Art Institute of Chicago’s Modern Wing from Nov. 12, 2010 through May 8, 2011, please visit [artic.edu/aic](http://artic.edu/aic).

### Exhibition Publication

A 70-page book commemorates the artist's life on this occasion, featuring photographs of the artist's home-studio, images from his sketchbooks, writings, and works-in-progress. With an introduction by SAIC Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty Lisa Wainwright and an interview with the curators, it also includes personal recollections by SAIC artist-colleagues Susanne Doremus, Phil Hanson, Richard Hull, Jim Nutt, Barbara Rossi, and Karl Wirsum. On sale beginning November 12 at the SAIC Sullivan Galleries for \$35, SAIC faculty, students, and alumni \$20.

### About the Sullivan Galleries

The School of the Art Institute of Chicago’s exhibitions bring to Chicago audiences the work of acclaimed and emerging artists through group exhibitions, artists’ projects and publications, while providing a forum for exchange among faculty, students and the public on the discourses of art today. The Sullivan Galleries are the largest single contemporary gallery space in Chicago’s Loop, located in the recently renovated Sullivan Center, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Buildings. The building was originally designed by architect Louis Sullivan and was home to the flagship store for Carson Pirie Scott & Co. for more than a century. The Sullivan Galleries are generally free and open to the public Tuesdays through Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. For more information, please visit [www.saic.edu/exhibitions](http://www.saic.edu/exhibitions).

### About the School of the Art Institute of Chicago

A leader in educating artists, designers, and scholars since 1866, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) offers nationally accredited undergraduate, graduate, and post-baccalaureate programs to nearly 3,200 students from across the globe. Located in the heart of Chicago, SAIC has an educational philosophy built upon an interdisciplinary approach to art and design, giving students unparalleled opportunities to develop their creative and critical abilities, while working with renowned faculty who include many of the leading practitioners in their fields. SAIC’s resources include the Art Institute of Chicago and its new Modern Wing; numerous special collections and programming venues provide students with exceptional exhibitions, screenings, lectures, and performances. For more information, please visit [www.saic.edu](http://www.saic.edu).

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### **A Walk through the Exhibition: Curator Notes by John Corbett and Jim Dempsey**

The core of the exhibition is a retrospective of Yoshida’s career. It emphasizes rarely seen works, culled from a range of collections, and revisits some of Yoshida’s most famous paintings and collages. Works by his teachers, colleagues, students, and other influences are presented alongside those by Yoshida, providing a deeper look into the artist’s career and allowing for advancement in the understanding of the evolution of his aesthetic.

Selections of ephemeral materials from the artist’s estate also punctuate the exhibition and add a particular grit and context—these include posters, postcards, invitations, letters, and sketchbooks. They also call attention to Yoshida’s and his students’ shared interest in viewing and collecting unusual objects for inspiration.

Unlike previous exhibitions, this show begins with a large selection of early work from Yoshida’s pre-Imagist period, as well as key paintings from the early 1960s, many of which have never been shown. These canvases feature his formally complex, ribbon-like abstractions and elucidate the evolution of Yoshida’s thinking as he moved from a post-war painting vocabulary towards the sleek look and emphatic color of pop. Additional works by two of Yoshida’s key teachers at SAIC, Kathleen Blackshear—whose interest in non-Western art was particularly important—and Paul Wiegardt suggest the influence of these artists on this early stage of Yoshida’s career.

The show continues with one of Yoshida’s signature discoveries in the late 1960s: the comic collage. Excising images from comic books, he compiled them into intricate, fascinating, often highly abstract groupings. Three Lucite boxes (1967) filled with crumpled comic pages are presented as possibly his earliest investigations of this idea. Yoshida’s subsequent comic collages,

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presented alongside works by his students are suggestive of a visual dialogue and exchange between teacher and students. Such works include a small sculptural work by Philip Hanson, a drawing with comic elements by Jim Nutt, and an exquisite corpse drawing completed by Yoshida and his students Christina Ramberg and Barbara Rossi.

While a mentor to many of the artists referred to as Chicago Imagists, it can be suggested that Yoshida represented a particular Chicago outpost of a much broader international investigation of comics and other vernacular sources, as seen in the work of others involved with this media. At the end of the 1960s, Yoshida began making paintings that incorporated elements from the comics, but were often still quite abstract.

A selection of Yoshida’s comics-oriented paintings are joined by contemporaneous works by West Coast painter Peter Saul and Swedish artist Oyvind Fahlström, as well as paintings by SAIC students Roger Brown, Jordan Davies, Ed Flood, Suellen Rocca, and Karl Wirsum. Three explosive, back-painted Plexiglas pieces by Gladys Nilsson are also included in this section.

A rich assortment of works from Yoshida’s prime years chart his development moving through his beloved abstractions of the 1970s—acrylics and felt-tip pen works, often featuring aggregates of abstracted objects—as well as a selection from his beloved “bathrobe” period, which includes the well-known painting, *Jizz & Jazz* (1971). Works by two key self-taught artists, Joseph Yoakum—whom Yoshida avidly helped promote—and Martín Ramírez, provide context for this period of Yoshida’s practice. Works from the mid-1970s to 1980s show Yoshida’s engagement with stronger figurative elements and include the title piece of the exhibition, *Touch and Go* (1980).

Finally, a second room of comic collage pieces from the 1990s-2000s demonstrates that Yoshida’s methods were not strictly sequential, but that he often returned to previous investigations and techniques. This section includes the monumental four-foot by six-foot collage *EWWWWWW! AAAHHHH! AAWOOOOOO!* (2002–2003), as well as works by subsequent generations of students including Mark Booth, Brian Calvin, Chris Ware, and Mary Lou Zelazny. Also on view is Yoshida’s final, incomplete comic collage, displayed along with the trusty tweezers he used to compile such pieces. The exhibition concludes with a selection of Yoshida’s remarkable, late oil paintings. In these canvases, Yoshida began to introduce cars and cloud-like forms, suspended free of context or landscape—reminiscent of the composition and energy found in his earlier comic book paintings.

### **A Biographical Sketch of Ray Yoshida**

Over the course of a half-century Raymond “Ray” Kakuo Yoshida (1930-2009, SAIC BFA 1953) was one of the most vital American artistic figures to work in Chicago. He attended the University of Hawaii in Honolulu from 1948 to 1950, but interrupted his schooling to serve in the United States Army. Subsequently, he moved to Chicago and earned a bachelor of fine arts degree from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1953. During the next several years here, Yoshida was a regular participant in the Art Institute of Chicago’s annual “Chicago & Vicinity” show and exhibited in “Momentum Midcontinental” (1954), the crucial breakaway show instigated by Leon Golub and others. Yoshida then moved to New York to attend Syracuse University, receiving a master of fine arts degree in 1958, but returned to Chicago the subsequent year and began teaching at SAIC.

Yoshida had his first solo exhibition in 1960 at the Middle Hall Gallery in Rockford, Illinois. In 1969 he participated in the landmark show “Don Baum Sez ‘Chicago Needs Famous Artists’” at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, as well as Baum’s “Made in Chicago” at the XII Bienal de Sao Paulo in 1973, which later traveled to The National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian, Washington D.C. and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

In 1984 Ray Yoshida had his first retrospective at Chicago’s N.A.M.E. gallery with over 50 works on view. In his catalog essay, critic Dennis Adrian observed: “...Yoshida has both presented his own voice in the context of Chicago art and also has done much to help several generations of other Chicago artists develop their own artistic identities and contributions to the art of the city.”

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Yoshida was honored with his first full-scale traveling show in 1998. This exhibition, “Ray Yoshida: A Retrospective 1968-1998” was organized by the Contemporary Museum in Honolulu and traveled to the Chicago Cultural Center, as well as the Madison Art Center (currently the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art) in Wisconsin.

Throughout the 1970s, Yoshida continued to show in the Art Institute of Chicago’s “Chicago & Vicinity” shows, as well as exhibited at galleries and other institutions such as: Richard Feigen Gallery, New York; Musée d’Art Contemporain, Montréal; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and the Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago. From 1975 to 1996 he showed regularly at the Phyllis Kind Gallery in Chicago and in 1981 at the Phyllis Kind Gallery in New York. His last solo exhibition was at the Adam Baumgold Gallery in New York in 1999.

Ray Yoshida was named to the position of Frank Harold Sellers Professor in the Department of Painting and Drawing at SAIC in 1971. He retired as professor emeritus in 1998 and continued to teach until 2003. In 2005 he returned to his birthplace, Hawaii, and remained until his death in 2009. His work is included in public collections including Art Institute of Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago; National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C.; Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna; Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York; The Contemporary Museum, Honolulu; Honolulu Academy of Arts, and the Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts.

### **About the Curators**

**John Corbett** is a writer and independent curator based in Chicago. His curatorial efforts have included an exhibition of the early work of Peter Brötzmann, retrospectives of Thomas H. Kapsalis, Kenneth Nack, Robert Amft and Tristan Meinecke, and “Pathways to Unknown Worlds,” an investigation of the artistic and intellectual milieu around the musician Sun Ra, co-curated with Anthony Elms and Terri Kapsalis. Corbett was artistic director of JazzFest Berlin in 2002 and produced hundreds of concerts and an annual festival of jazz and improvised music in Chicago starting in the early 1990s. His books include *Extended Play: Sounding Off from John Cage to Dr. Funkenstein* (Duke U. Press, 1994) and *The Wisdom of Sun-Ra* (WhiteWalls, 2006), and he has recently contributed essays to catalogs on artists Jim Lutes and Albert Oehlen. He is Adjunct Associate Professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he has taught since 1988. He is co-founder of Corbett vs. Dempsey Gallery.

**Jim Dempsey** is an artist, curator, and well-known figure in Chicago film circles. For over 15 years, he has been manager of the Gene Siskel Film Center, where he programmed a popular series of weekly music movies and a month-long festival in 2003 celebrating the musician Sun Ra. A painter and collage artist, Dempsey graduated from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1991. At SAIC, he was a student of Ray Yoshida, Thomas H. Kapsalis, Tom Palazzolo, and Judith Russi Kirschner. Long interested in Chicago’s rich cultural life, Dempsey began independently organizing exhibitions dedicated to Midwest artists in 2002. In 2004, he co-founded Corbett vs. Dempsey Gallery and in 2007 he and John Corbett collaborated on a 150-year survey at the Chicago History Museum titled “Big Picture: A New View of Painting in Chicago.” Dempsey has contributed articles on mid-century Chicago artists, Milwaukee artist Karl Priebe, and album cover graphics to *Stop Smiling* magazine.