

LEO KOENIG INC.

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*For Immediate Release:*

### **Yoshitaka Amano**

June 25<sup>th</sup> through August 3, 2002

*Opening reception Tuesday June 25<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 to 8:00 PM*

**Leo Koenig Inc.** is pleased to announce the opening of an exhibition of new work by the *anime* luminary Yoshitaka Amano. Revered in Japan for his participation in the worlds of *manga*, *anime* and video games, Yoshitaka Amano worked as a creator of such favorites as "Speed Racer," "G-Force" and later "Final Fantasy." Although this marks the first exposure of his work to a fine art audience in New York City, he is considered to have inspired a whole generation of contemporary artists such as Mariko Mori, Takasha Murakami and Yoshitomo Nara.

For his exhibition at Leo Koenig Inc. Amano has created large-scale paintings of characters that have become familiar to us by way of the flickering cathode ray emanating from our TV sets, pulsing through light into the comfort of our living rooms. Painted on aluminum, and detached from their surroundings, the faces from G-Force and Speed Racer suddenly hint closer to Japanese ritual masks than to Saturday morning cartoons. Presented on the cool, impervious metal, the characters reveal a progression of centuries from Samurai Warrior to Super Hero in a split-second glance.

Accompanying the large scale paintings, this exhibition will also include more intimate works done in the 700-year-old tradition of monochrome ink painting known as *sumi-e*. Applied to fragile, absorbent rice paper, the key to *sumi-e* painting lies in its brushstrokes made with no room for error. It relies upon the rapid application of gestures that have been repeated so often as to become second nature. Also integral to *sumi-e* is the idea of presenting the essence of something. This capturing of essence combines with the speed of gesture, resulting in a secondary effect of an approximation of instantaneous travel and warp-speed velocity while remaining Zen-like, in the present. In her essay on Yoshitaka Amano, Rachel Kushner eloquently describes this approximation as "a studied transmutation from extroversion to introversion, a nexus where differing concepts of time, vectors of past and future, come together."

Yoshitaka Amano was born in 1952 in a small town in Shizuoka, Japan near Mt. Fuji. At fifteen, Amano traveled to Tokyo with the intention of becoming an animator. There he was hired by Tatsunoko Productions where he remained for 15 years creating such characters as "Hutch the Honeybee," "Tekkaman" and the tremendously popular "Gatchaman," (or "G-Force" as it was known in the States), which became Tatsunoko's most successful superhero *anime* and was broadcast throughout the world. At 30, Amano left Tatsunoko Productions to pursue a more independent career as a freelance artist. Over the last twenty years he has remained a prolific creative force in various mediums such as drawing, painting, novel illustration, film, lithography, ceramics, costume design and video games. He divides his time between Tokyo, New York City and Paris. A 196-page catalogue produced by Leo Koenig Inc. with an essay by Rachel Kushner will be available during the exhibition.

For more Information or visuals, please contact Leo Koenig or Elizabeth Balogh at the gallery.