Press Release

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CHIHO AOSHIMA: REBIRTH OF THE WORLD OPENS AT SAM’S ASIAN ART MUSEUM MAY 2, 2015

May 2–October 4, 2015

SEATTLE, WA – The Seattle Art Museum (SAM) presents Chiho Aoshima: Rebirth of the World, a fantasy world created by the Japanese artist Chiho Aoshima (born 1974). Opening on May 2 at SAM’s Asian Art Museum, the exhibition features colorful large-scale dreamscapes printed on plexiglass, 35 drawings on paper, and an animation that will be shown in public for the first time.

The exhibition is the debut of Aoshima’s second foray into video work. She has teamed up with New Zealand animator Bruce Ferguson to animate her drawings into a living, moving world. Their first collaboration, in 2005 was titled City Glow and was met with critical acclaim. This video is titled Takaamanojara, which has great personal meaning for Aoshima. Takaamanojara (“the plain of high heaven”) is a place where Japanese Shinto deities reside. A Shinto myth explains that at the time of creation, light, pure elements branched off to become heaven; while heavy, turbid elements branched off to become earth. Heaven (ama) became the home of the gods of heaven, while earth became the home of gods of the land.

Not formally trained in art, Aoshima graduated from the Department of Economics at Hosei University before going to work for the Japanese Neo-Pop artist Takashi Murakami, who eventually made her a member of his Kaikai Kiki collective.
Influenced by anime and manga, Aoshima stands apart through her futuristic view of renewal after catastrophe. She merges the cuteness of Japanese *kawaii* culture with a melancholic vision of a post-apocalyptic landscape. Even with undeniably dark images, her work has a positive attitude. There’s no evidence of fear in her art. Her murals and paintings don’t escape from society or from the future. Instead, she embraces all possibilities, including a world where the skeletons and ghosts reside alongside the rest of us.

Through her work, Aoshima creates a fantastic world where she asks the viewer to reimagine the future. Who’s to say that as technology advances, as natural disasters rise, as the organic world blends with the manmade, that smartphones will not become smart buildings? That skyscrapers will not stand up and walk among mountains? That ghosts and spirits don’t already float through our world?

When asked about her inspiration, Aoshima answered, “The evolution of human civilization is great; humankind thinks nature precious, but it is difficult for humankind and nature to coexist. I represented these two souls that cannot understand each other through the images of buildings and mountains.”

This exhibition is organized by the Seattle Art Museum. Presenting Sponsor is the Seattle Office of Arts and Culture. Media Sponsor is The Stranger. Additional support provided by contributors to the SAM Fund.

ABOUT SEATTLE ART MUSEUM
As the leading visual art institution in the Pacific Northwest, SAM draws on its global collections, powerful exhibitions, and dynamic programs to provide unique educational resources benefiting the Seattle region, the Pacific Northwest, and beyond. SAM was founded in 1933 with a focus on Asian art. By the late 1980s the museum had outgrown its original home, and in 1991 a new 155,000-square-foot downtown building, designed by Robert Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates, opened to the public. The 1933 building was renovated and reopened as the Asian Art Museum. SAM’s desire to further serve its community was realized in 2007 with the opening of two stunning new facilities: the nine-acre Olympic Sculpture Park (designed by Weiss/Manfredi Architects)—a “museum without walls,” free and open to all—and the Allied Works Architecture designed 118,000-square-foot expansion of its main, downtown location, including 232,000 square feet of additional space built for future expansion.

From a strong foundation of Asian art to noteworthy collections of African and Oceanic art, Northwest Coast Native American art, European and American art, and modern and contemporary art, the strength of SAM’s collection of more than 25,000 objects lies in its diversity of media, cultures and time periods.