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EXHIBITION FUSES LUSH COLOR, IMAGERY,
OF TRADITIONAL JAPAN WITH FIERCE BEAUTY OF GRAFFITI

Zephyr: Paintings by Gajin Fujita on view September 8–November 5, 2006
at Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art

KANSAS CITY, MO—An upcoming exhibition at the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art takes a closer look at an artist whose paintings deftly merge the traditional imagery and color of Japanese iconography with the vibrant street-culture sensibilities of urban Los Angeles. *Zephyr: Paintings by Gajin Fujita*, on view September 8–November 5, 2006, at the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art and

curated by the Kemper Museum's Elizabeth Dunbar, surveys nearly a decade of works by Los Angeles-based Gajin Fujita, a promising artist who is taking the art world by storm with his highly charged fusion of colors, cultures, and media. With an expressive mix of past and present, high art and pop culture, and Eastern and Western



Ride or Die (detail), 2005; gold and white gold leaf, paint marker, spray paint, Mean Streak, 83 X 126 inches; Collection of Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Bebe and Crosby Kemper Collection

aesthetics, Fujita creates visual metaphors for today's global society.

Zephyr: Paintings by Gajin Fujita opens with a free, public reception 5:30–7:30 p.m., Friday, September 8, with an artist talk at 6:30 p.m. Seating is first come, first served. *Zephyr* is Fujita's first solo museum exhibition, and he is a visiting artist at the Kemper Museum. Museum admission is free.

Fujita's paintings come to life in the same way that a DJ might mix music for a

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packed dance floor at a nightclub. He samples old imagery from the past and merges it with newer forms of expression, specifically graffiti. Using acrylics, spray paint, and gold and silver leaf on wood panel, he produces provocative imagery that draws from Japan's artistic past, including erotic woodblock prints, with figurative elements such as Samurai warriors, lotus flowers, and lusty geishas. He then adds his own touches in graffiti, often inviting fellow graffiti artist friends to "bomb" his paintings.

Fujita draws upon a background that is as rich and varied as the energy and dynamics of his imaginative artworks. His mother is a conservator of Japanese art, and his father was an abstract landscape painter. Growing up in the LA suburb of Boyle Heights, Fujita saw graffiti everyday while riding the bus to attend school in East Los Angeles. He eventually tried tagging himself, becoming a member of the esteemed West Coast graffiti crew K2S (Kill to Succeed). His initial fascination with the lush visuals of Japanese tattooing led to an appreciation of Japanese woodblock printing by artists such as Ando Hiroshige and Katsushika Hokusai. He also found inspiration in contemporary Japanese cartoons and traditional gold and silver leafing techniques. *Zephyr* gives the public an important opportunity to examine the skillful fusion of old and new in Fujita's works with a comprehensive overview of the artist's expressions and development.

Fujita was born in 1972 in Los Angeles, where he currently lives and works. He received a BFA in 1997 from the Otis College of Art and Design, Westchester, CA, and in 2000 completed an MFA at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He has shown his work in exhibitions around the world, including at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; the LA Louver, Venice, CA, and Rolfe Ricke, Cologne, Germany. Notable group exhibitions include *Drawn*, Kravets/Wehbly Gallery, New York; *Art 34 Basel* and *Art 35 Basel* in Basel, Switzerland; *Floating World Redux: Gajin Fujita and Yasumasa Morimura*, Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, NC; and *Beau Monde: Toward a Redeemed Cosmopolitanism*, Site Santa Fe's 4th International Biennial.

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About the Kemper Museum

Kansas City's acclaimed, free contemporary art museum, the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art opened in 1994 and draws more than 130,000 visitors each year. The Museum boasts a rapidly growing permanent collection of modern and contemporary works of artists from around the world. The Museum hosts temporary exhibitions, installations, performance work, film and video series, lectures, concerts, children's workshops, and other creative programs designed to both entertain and challenge. For more information, visit www.kemperart.org.

The Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art is open 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m., Tuesday–Thursday; 10:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m., Friday–Saturday; and 11:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Sunday. The galleries at Kemper East (200 E. 44th Street) are open 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m., Tuesday–Thursday. The Museum's popular Café Sebastienne serves lunch 11:00 a.m.–2:30 p.m., Tuesday–Saturday; dinner 5:30–9:30 p.m., Friday–Saturday; and brunch 11:00 a.m.–2:30 p.m., Sunday. The Museum and Café are closed on Mondays.

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