

Media information: Friday 2 May 2008

# BALTIC

**YOSHITOMO NARA + graf**

**A to Z Project**

**Saturday 14 June to Sunday 26 October 2008**

**Level 4**

For the first time in a UK public gallery Japanese artist **Yoshitomo Nara** and creative design team **graf** present the latest installation in the ongoing **A to Z Project** at **BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art**. The exhibition can be seen from **Saturday 14 June to Sunday 26 October 2008**.

**Yoshitomo Nara's** work embodies a defiant spirit that comes with youthful optimism and belief that we can change the world. He is best known for his deceptively simple drawings, paintings and sculptures of children with apparently innocent, kawaii or cute expressions. **Kristin Chambers** explains further in **Yoshitomo Nara: Nothing Ever Changes** 'Their direct gazes and impish grins suggest that although they're young and darling, these kids sense what the world has in store for them'. Influenced by popular culture from punk music, rock 'n' roll and **Manga** to the American cartoons of his childhood, **Nara** explores the tensions of a hyper consumer culture.

At **BALTIC**, **Nara** continues his ongoing collaboration with creative design unit **graf**: the **A-Z Project** which began in **2003**. The project explores the relationship between the individual, the space they inhabit and objects within their surroundings. It aims to revive the idea of narrative, the relationship between the work and its environment, art and life. For each phase of the project, the team create a new wooden structure or 'house' that responds to the particular environment of the exhibition space. Ultimately the project will accumulate more than 26 houses over the course of 26 exhibitions. Together the houses create an imaginary town with each street named after a letter 'A' to 'Z'.

For the next stage of their project, **Nara** and **graf** will construct three cross-shaped 'houses' at **BALTIC**. Two of these are reconstructions from earlier stages; the third house is specially designed for the exhibition and built using local reclaimed materials.

**Nara + graf's** recent exhibitions include **Torre de Malaga**, Malaga, **GEM** Hague, **Galerie Zink** Berlin, **A to Z Hiosaki**, **Welcome to Soi Sabai** Bangkok, **Stephen Friedman Gallery** London, **Yokohama Triennale 2005** and **Home graf media gm**, Osaka.

In 2007, in celebration of the gallery's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday and the opening of a new £500,000 learning facility **BALTIC** commissioned **Nara** to produce a new series of site specific large scaled drawings in vinyl which have been on show to the public since July 2007.

Building for the **A to Z Project** is due to commence early **May 08** and will be on view from the Level 5 viewing platform.

The exhibition is supported by **The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation**, **The Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation**, **The Japan Foundation**, **Japan 150** and **Faulkner Browns Architects**

**END**

**For further information please contact:**

Ann Cooper, Media Officer T: 0191 440 4915 E: [annc@balticmill.com](mailto:annc@balticmill.com)

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Yoshitomo Nara currently lives and works in Japan, and exhibits worldwide.

Having received his B.F.A. (1985) and an M.F.A. (1987) from the Aichi Prefectural University of Fine Arts and Music, Nara studied at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, in Dusseldorf, Germany from 1988 to 1993.

Nara started exhibiting in Japan in 1984, and in 1989 began to exhibit internationally. He has had nearly 40 solo exhibitions since 1984 and is represented by Stephen Friedman Gallery, London; Tomio Koyama Gallery, Toyko; Galerie Michael Zink, Berlin; Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York and Blum & Poe, Los Angeles.

In the UK Nara has exhibited in Jam: Tokyo London, 2001 Barbican Centre, London; The Galleries Show 2003, Royal Academy of Arts, London and at Stephen Friedman Gallery, London in 2000, 2003 and 2006.

Yoshitomo Nara + graf is a collaborative project between the artist and graf, the international design company founded in Osaka. The A-Z Project started in 2003 when Nara met Hideki Toyoshima, an artist and one of the founders of graf. To date they have collaborated on projects in Japan, Spain, UK, Holland and Korea.

The exhibition at BALTIC in June 2008 will be the first show at a major UK public gallery for Nara + graf.

To find out more about **Yoshitomo Nara + graf** as well as other exhibitions at BALTIC visit the BALTIC Library & Archive online database <http://archive.balticmill.com> The database contains over 100 films and audio files documenting the artists and their work.

## NOTES TO EDITORS

**BALTIC** is a major international centre for contemporary art situated on the south bank of the River Tyne in Gateshead, England. BALTIC presents a constantly changing, distinctive and ambitious programme of exhibitions and events, and is a world leader in the presentation, commissioning and communication of contemporary visual art. BALTIC has welcomed over 2.7 million visitors, since opening to the public in July 2002.

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art  
Gateshead Quays  
South Shore Road  
Gateshead  
NE8 3BA  
UK  
Tel: +44 (0) 191 478 1810  
Fax: +44 (0) 191 478 1922  
[info@balticmill.com](mailto:info@balticmill.com)

### Opening hours:

Monday - Sunday 10.00 - 18.00 (excluding Tuesday)  
Tuesday 10.30 – 18.00

### ADMISSION FREE

[www.balticmill.com](http://www.balticmill.com)



