

***THE VISION AND ART OF SHINJO ITO EXHIBITION***  
**CELEBRATES MODERN BUDDHIST MASTER AND ARTIST**  
**The Centennial Exhibition Presents Work**  
**Never Before Seen Outside of Japan**

New York, NY, December 10, 2007 — In 2008 the U.S audiences will be introduced to *The Vision and Art of Shinjo Ito*, a landmark exhibition that commemorates the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Shinjo Ito, the founder of the Shinnyo-en order of Buddhism and a major Buddhist sculptor of Japan's Showa Era (1925-1989). *The Vision and Art of Shinjo Ito*, which features over one hundred pieces of Buddhist and secular sculpture, engravings, calligraphy, drawings, photography, audio-video installations and other artifacts, will be on view at New York's Milk Gallery February 21 – March 30, 2008, with an exclusive press preview on February 20. The exhibition will then travel to Chicago (April 8 - May 1, press preview on April 7) and Los Angeles (May 8 – June 29, press preview on May 7).

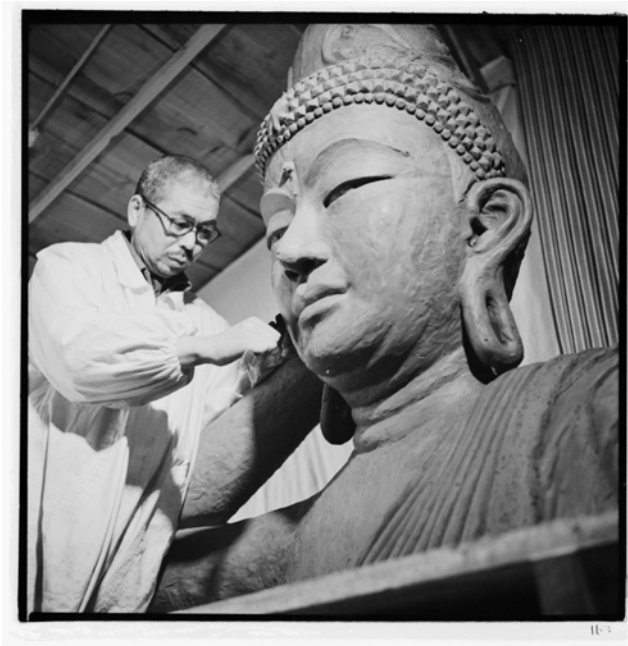
“This important exhibition gives U.S. audiences a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to gain insight into the heart and mind of a major Buddhist figure of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and one of Japan's most revered spiritual leaders,” said Hiroko Sakomura, exhibition's curator and general director. “Shinjo Ito created devotional images based on a personal interpretation of scriptures, combining elements of traditional Buddhist art with a fresh, modern approach.”



***The Vision and Art of Shinjo Ito***

Shinjo Ito created extraordinary art objects that are, at the same time, powerful meditative tools. The exhibition's centerpiece and most inspiring image is the *Great Parinirvana Image*, a sculpture of a reclining Buddha about to enter nirvana at the end of his life. Completed in just three months in 1957 with the combined efforts of Shinjo Ito and his congregation, it is the artist's first major

sculpture and his largest work of art at 16 feet long. Other sculpture on exhibit reflects Shinjo Ito's personal sense of Buddhism as well as his interest in Greek sculpture and aesthetics: In addition to the devotional works, *The Vision and Art of Shinjo Ito* includes a number of busts of the artist's family members, friends and of senior priests of the order. Prominent among them are the portrait sculptures of the artist's two sons, both of whom died at an early age. In Shinjo Ito's own words: "What I seek to create is not just the physical form of a Buddha figure. My purpose for sculpting them is to inspire and motivate everyone to grow spiritually."



### **Shinjo Ito (1906-1989)**

Shinjo Ito was born on March 28, 1906 in Yamanashi, Japan. He showed extraordinary artistic talent as a child and went on to study photography and to win awards for his work. At the same time Shinjo Ito was drawn towards spirituality. Eventually he gave up his job as an engineer to enter Kyoto's Daigoji monastery, the head temple of the Daigo school of Shingon Buddhism, one of Japan's oldest denominations where he attained the

rank of Grand Master. Even after Shinjo Ito and his followers established the order of Shinnyo-en, art continued to be an integral part of Shinjo Ito's religious pursuit and he sculpted and photographed throughout his life.

### **Shinnyo-en**

Shinnyo-en is an independent Buddhist order based on the teachings of the Nirvana Sutra which emphasizes Buddhism for lay practitioners as well as monastics. Founded on the commitment to universal truth, compassion and service, Shinnyo-en teaches that all people carry the seed of enlightenment within them and that by acting with sincerity and kindness, they can bring that seed to fruition. Shinnyo-en encourages

the application of the teachings of the Buddha into one's daily life, with no requirements to leave one's current faith.

Today Shinnyo-en is a global order, with almost one million active followers in 48 countries around the world. Shinnyo-en is led by **Shinso Ito**, the daughter of Shinjo Ito and a Buddhist Grand Master. Master Shinso assumed the leadership of Shinnyo-en in 1989. The only woman today to lead a Buddhist order, she also became the first woman to officiate a service in the main hall of Kyoto's temple of Daigo in its 1,100-year history.

*In addition to [The Vision and Art of Shinjo Ito](#), Milk Gallery will hold special Thursday gatherings with focus on yoga, meditation, art history and other topics. For more information on these and on the exhibition, visit [www.shinjoito.com](http://www.shinjoito.com)*