



## **Toshio Saeki – Kuro Hozuki**

November 9, 2010 through March 10, 2011

“Osaka, Japan, the end of the 1950s. A primary school, a quiet classroom, a blackboard covered with writing, an absent-minded teacher. Rows of uniformed boys, disciplined and yet excited. Outside, a playground surrounded by trees in bloom and a path meanders off into the distance. At the back of the room, two young rogues with feverish gestures pour over a series of lewd colourful prints. Confused, embarrassed, fascinated: they are the beginning of a vocation, born in the hothouse of puberty and secrecy.

One boy is Uemura ( resourceful and bold he hides the collection of prints in his backpack), the other is his friend Toshio. Toshio Saeki.

After school, Toshio goes home on foot. Tortured by his lustful visions of crime and copulation, he is disturbed, agitated, perturbed. The spirit of the great masters float around his young and frail person. Yoshitoshi, Hokusai, Utamaro, Ekin - the most sublime drawers of half-opened vulvas and tumescent phalli have grabbed his attention. One day, he decides, he will be one of them.

Tokyo, 1970. Saeki has left his native town for Tokyo in the hope publishing some of his drawings. A modest studio, long, frugal, solitary days chained to his desk, the artist works away on his drawings to the day when liberated from the style of his masters and predecessors, he finally finds his own style.

Its the period of Flower Power, of the economic boom and of the suicide of Japan's greatest artist, the poet Mishima. Saeki, does the rounds of the editors, a book of drawings under his arm. Unanimously, they refuse to publish his drawings. But then overnight, everything changes : the renowned men's magazine « Heibon Punch » decides to offer its readers a selection of his works. The day after publication, requests for interviews, invitations and commissions come pouring in. His career is launched.

Since then, Saeki has not ceased to develop his remarkable draughtsman and colourist skills in an attempt to explore ever more deeply the obscure regions of the unconscious. The two principal ingredients of his art are the clearness of his pen-stroke ( the fruit of an extreme self-control and unfailing lucidity), and his passion for the Eros, ( or ero, the japanese term which he prefers, as according to the artist, it highlights the notion of death). In other words, a line of clear and dark intentions.

Saeki's sulfurous universe is utero-centered. Everything gravitates around the cyclopean eye which is both a foundation, a terrifying cave, a refuge, a source of pleasure and a Pandora's box. His drawing is as much a threshold as a hidden passage, leading us from as state of wakefulness to dream or nightmare.

Each drawing tells a story. There are voyeurs, perverts and the tortured. A young girl in school uniform her hand in her pants furtively observes a scene of copulation, whilst a lecherous old man secretly enjoys the double spectacle. A beheaded mother chases her offspring. Monsters prey on teenage girls. A depraved nun pleasures herself. Old men with phallic heads commit minor sometimes even tragic crimes.

And often, in the heart of the nightmare, culinary pleasures are combined with the sexual. Having read this, you cannot claim we did not warn you.”

David Rosenberg. Paris, october 2010