

RYAN LEE

RYAN LEE GALLERY LLC
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George Miyasaki

Deep Space (1981-1989)

October 29 – December 23, 2022

Opening reception: Saturday, October 29, 6:00-8:00 pm

RYAN LEE is pleased to announce *George Miyasaki: Deep Space (1981-1989)*, an exhibition of Miyasaki's paintings produced in the 1980s. This was a highly successful decade for the artist during which he exhibited widely throughout the West Coast. The five paintings and two works on paper on view at the gallery reflect the artist's mature artistic style, in which he uses thickly built-up surfaces and collaged papers to achieve weighty yet contemplative compositions that effortlessly capture the delicate and structured.

Miyasaki first became known as a premier West Coast Abstract Expressionist painter in the 1950s, though, despite his early success, his contributions to the movement were largely overlooked. Today, he is the subject of renewed interest due in part to an increased interest in expanding art historical perspectives. His practice evolved from his expressionist approach during the mid-1960s in favor of more systematic investigations of color and form. The rigorous geometric characteristics of this period subsequently softened, and by 1978, Miyasaki was freely combining collage elements with hard-edge shapes and spontaneous, expressionistic paint application.

The works produced throughout the 1980s demonstrate Miyasaki's deepened involvement with paper. During this decade, the artist found his voice in both painting and printmaking with compositions that balanced abstraction, gentle and hard-edge shapes, delicate lines, and shadows of paint. His exploration of paper in particular manifests in some of his paintings as a mixed-media impasto composed of numerous layers of torn paper painted in acrylic. His 1980s paintings began incorporating checkered patterns, calligraphic brushstrokes, and thickly built-up surfaces. In works such as *Bigstone* (1989), Miyasaki interrupts the mottled purple hues with layers of thickly collaged paper placed slightly off-center the general composition, lending the painting a multi-dimensional aspect. These ridges of paper and acrylic are achieved in shades of purple and blue, and are marked by a checkered pattern that remains omnipresent throughout his output during this decade.

The materiality of his 1980s works is both a departure and combination of his previous expressionist works and hard-edge pop-art style of the 1960s and 1970s. The overall compositions, however, remain true to their Abstract Expressionist origins with their ambiguous built-up surfaces and interplays of gestural brushstrokes and drawn lines. He continued to explore the physicality of his late work through the 1990s. "I deal with things like hard and soft, whether they're organic or synthetic," Miyasaki explained. "I don't see things in subjects. A yin-yang kind of thing, I guess, that's the easiest way I can describe what I do. I try to use opposites to balance one thing with another."

This will be Miyasaki's second exhibition at RYAN LEE. This show will be the first significant presentation of this important body of work in the 21st century. Miyasaki's 1980s paintings constitute an important chapter in the development of abstraction in American art. The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue with an essay by Dr. Tom Wolf, a Professor of Art History and Visual Culture at Bard College specializing in twentieth century Asian American art history.

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George Miyasaki (b. 1935 Kalopa, HI – d. 2013 Berkeley, CA) was a painter and printmaker active in the San Francisco Bay Area arts scene during the mid-to-late twentieth century. Although primarily known for his adeptly and lushly colored Abstract Expressionist work, Miyasaki's contributions to the movement were largely ignored during his lifetime due to his race.

Miyasaki gained acclaim as a brilliant colorist in the late 1950s and early 60s for his Abstract Expressionist paintings and prints. Unlike his counterparts of the New York School, Miyasaki was concerned with the spontaneity and randomness of natural creation rather than expressing his own inner psychology. He often drew inspiration from the local landscape, referring to California and the American West in his titles. In the mid-1960s, Miyasaki departed from gestural abstraction and experimented with Pop Art collages before pursuing systematized studies of color and hard-edged shapes in the 1970s, developing his own abstract language that reduced complex organic forms into simple geometric ones.

His paintings from the 1980s and 1990s incorporated letters, numbers, checkered patterns, calligraphic brushstrokes and thickly built-up surfaces. He continued to explore this materiality in his late work through the 2000s, combining both expressionistic and hard-edge abstraction with cut-out shapes layered onto the canvas.

Miyasaki has received numerous prestigious awards, such as the Henry Ward Ranger Purchase Award (2001), National Academy of Design (1993, 1995), Brooklyn Museum Purchase Award (1958, 2001), National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship (1985, 1980), and the Guggenheim Fellowship (1963).

In 2017, Miyasaki was a part of *Abstract Expressionism: Looking East from the Far West*, a group exhibit curated by Theresa Papanikolas at the Honolulu Museum of Art seeking to re-examine the profound influence of Asian art on Abstract Expressionism. In 2019, he was featured in *Photo Revolution: Andy Warhol to Cindy Sherman* at the Worcester Art Museum in Massachusetts. Miyasaki has been featured in over 30 more solo and over 300 more group exhibitions at the Yale University Art Gallery, CT (2022); Wallach Art Gallery at Columbia University, NY (2022); Worcester Art Museum, MA (2019); Honolulu Museum of Art, HI (2018); Richmond Art Center, CA (2011); Worth Ryder Gallery at UC Berkeley, CA (2014); De Young Museum, CA (2008); Fort Collins Museum of Contemporary Art, CO (2008); National Academy of Design, NY (2007); International Print Center, NY (2003); Cummer Museum, FL (2003); Amon Carter Museum, TX (1990); Nelson-Atkins Museum, MO (1990); Samuel P. Harn Museum, FL (1990); Embassy of the United States, Yugoslavia (1986); Portland Art Museum, OR (1983); Seoul Fine Arts Center, South Korea (1983); Brooklyn Museum, NY (1983); and Gallery of Modern Art, Washington, DC (1966).

Miyasaki's work is held in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, IL; British Museum, London; Brooklyn Museum, NY; Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University, NY; Honolulu Academy of Arts, HI; University of Texas, Austin, TX; Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; National Academy of Design, NY; National Gallery, Washington, DC; Oakland Museum of California, CA; Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA; Portland Art Museum, ME; San Diego Museum, CA; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; Whitney Museum of American Art, NY; and the Worcester Art Museum, MA.