

RYAN LEE

RYAN LEE GALLERY LLC
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George Miyasaki

Abstract Expressionist California: Paintings and Lithographs, 1955-61

May 16 – June 15, 2019

RYAN LEE is pleased to announce George Miyasaki (1935-2013), *Abstract Expressionist California: Paintings and Lithographs, 1955-1961*. This is RYAN LEE's first presentation of Miyasaki's work since announcing the representation of his estate last December. The exhibition will feature a selection of Miyasaki's acclaimed early abstractions, many of which have never before been shown.

Miyasaki was born in rural Hawaii to Japanese parents and grew up under martial law during World War II. In 1953 he moved to Oakland, California to study with Richard Diebenkorn and Nathan Oliveira at the California College of Arts & Crafts. Working in both painting and printmaking, Miyasaki cultivated a Bay Area-inflected brand of abstract expressionism. Drawing inspiration from nature, particularly the western landscape, paintings like *Coastline* (1960) use a pale palette of gray-blues, sea green, rose, and a few dabs of yellow to convey a foggy seascape with subdued hues that are tempered by its thickly painted surface. This balanced execution of harmony and dissonance is also characteristic of *Terrain #2* (1961) and *Horizon #2* (1958), both of which demonstrate Miyasaki's gestural application of controlled color.

The apex of the abstract expressionist movement in the United States during the immediate postwar years corresponded with a period of intense discrimination against Asian Americans, particularly those of Japanese descent. As a result, while the influence of Zen Buddhism and calligraphy were celebrated by many of the white male practitioners historically associated with the New York School, acknowledgement of these concepts' Asian origins were routinely denied. This omission was promulgated by the preeminent critic Clement Greenberg, who falsely dismissed this interest in Asian culture as "cursory," further relegating Asian influence and Asian American artists like Miyasaki and contemporaries such as Ruth Asawa to the margins of twentieth-century art history. Despite his celebrated and sustained presence in the Bay Area art scene, Miyasaki's distance from New York and his continued exploration of abstraction amidst the burgeoning Bay Area figurative movement has slowed the pace of his national recognition. This presentation of Miyasaki's work at RYAN LEE comes at a time when revisionist art history is at last widening the modernist canon to include the contributions of nonwhite artists, and many Asian American artists for the first time.

George Miyasaki (1935, Kalopa, HI – 2013, Berkeley, CA) was an American painter and printmaker active in the San Francisco Bay Area art scene during the mid-to-late twentieth century. In 2017, Miyasaki was included in the important exhibition, *Abstract Expressionism: Looking East from the Far West* curated by Theresa Papanikolas at the Honolulu Museum of Art, a breakthrough exhibition that sought to re-examine the profound influence of Asian art on Abstract Expressionism in the United States. Miyasaki has been featured in over 30 solo and 300 group exhibitions, and he 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 Guggenheim Fellowship (1963). Miyasaki's work is held in the collections of the Art Institute

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of Chicago; the British Museum, London; the Brooklyn Museum; Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University, Ithaca; Honolulu Academy of Arts; James A. Michener Collection at the University of Texas, Austin; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; National Academy of Design, New York; National Gallery, Washington, D.C.; Oakland Museum of California; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Portland Art Museum; San Diego Museum; San Francisco Art Commission; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and Worcester Museum of Art.

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