MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY
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Miyoko Ito

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ARTFORUM

REVIEWS

NEW YORK

Miyoko Ito

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

Glowing with subtle gradations of color, the singular visions that Miyoko Ito (1918–1983) committed to canvas throughout the 1970s conflate interior and exterior realms, simultaneously evoking desolate vistas and sun-drenched rooms. Her improvised but methodically built-out compositions—populated with archways, windows that could be mirrors, and pictures within pictures—confine as often as they reflect, refract, or open onto sweeping panoramas. *Untitled*, 1970, embodies this confusion: One seems to look at, into, and through the depicted space. At the painting's center is a depthless, diagonally striped mound, a loafing mass sitting for a portrait—it's even capped with a wisp of wavy hair. Encasing this form are walls painted in a punchy coral that gradually transitions to ripe persimmon and dusty pink. A favored technique of Ito's, the ombré shading suggests twilight's transience. Light is the real subject here: the fiery radiance of dusk pouring into the room from the window above. Or is that a picture frame?

Miyoko Ito, *Untitled*, 1975, oil on canvas, 60¼ × 68¼".

This exhibition, like the long overdue survey of Ito's art mounted at New York's Artists Space five years ago, focused on her prolific output from the 1970s, but a handful of paintings and three lithographs from the first half of her career provided a welcome opportunity to understand her artistic development. Ito's story is hard to disentangle from her work, and the catalogue accompanying the Matthew Marks show reinforces this connection: A biographical chronology is the only text in the slim volume. Ito was born to Japanese immigrants in Berkeley, California, and, aside from five formative but trying childhood years in Japan, was raised there as well. In April 1942, shortly after the US entered World War II and one month before she was set to graduate from the University of California, Berkeley, she was forcibly relocated to the Tanforan internment camp for Japanese Americans. A scholarship to Smith College enabled her to leave the detention center, but she later transferred to the Art Institute of Chicago and settled in that city, where she would develop her signature style.

Ito worked out of her home while raising two children, painting by day on one canvas at a time. *Easel and Table*, 1948, an early example of her preoccupation with spatial tension, captures her cramped working conditions, her studio infringing

Murtha, Chris. "Miyoko Ito." *Artforum* 61, no. 10, Summer 2023, p. 240.

upon her living space. Gradually, over the course of three decades, she established a presence within Chicago's art scene, despite her familial responsibilities and struggles with cancer and mental health. She exhibited alongside the Imagists at Phyllis Kind Gallery, but she aligned herself more closely with a small group of painters self-dubbed the Allusive Abstractionists for their emphasis on observation-based abstraction over pure objective form. She was a senior figure in both circles, and her evocative formalism represented a generational and stylistic bridge between the two. As a result, she made an impression on younger artists, including Christina Ramberg and Diane Simpson.

Ito emphasized the physicality and facture of her paintings by leaving aspects of her process visible. The carpenter's tacks used to fasten her canvases to stretchers remained partially exposed on several paintings here, forming a protective frame of punctures that speaks to the vulnerability and impermanence of any artwork. The artist also preserved traces of her preliminary charcoal drawings, and the green underpaintings, which subdue her warmer tones, seep through to the surface. As evident in the stratified bands of *River of Pediment*, 1972, she painted right up to the edges of the charcoal lines, leaving a negative space that helps delineate volume. Her meticulously crafted, taut compositions are also, by design, surprisingly sketchy and fluid. Using short linear brushstrokes, she produced extremely matte, light-absorbing surfaces, her oils taking on the dry quality of pastels, as arid as the illusory landscapes she conjures.

Though Ito's paintings have the aura of landscapes, they are not of any particular location. Her abstractions can evoke vistas from her lived experience: views of the Pacific Ocean from Northern California and Japan; the high-altitude deserts of Utah, where her husband was interred; or the vast, flat expanses of Lake Michigan and the Midwest. *Untitled #126*, ca. 1970, depicts a sun setting over a distinctly Northern California bay. Yet other paintings are almost entirely composed of atmospheric light and surreal accents, such as the winged sun and the giant squeegee sweeping across the sky in *Act One in the Desert*, 1977. As she indicated with the title of a 1972 painting, *A No Place Landscape* (not on view here), her vistas, like desert mirages, were products of the mind as much as of the world. No place and every place: Her paintings bring us there.

— *Chris Murtha*

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VULTURE

ART REVIEW | APR. 11, 2023

A Sanctuary Between Japan and America

By Jerry Saltz, New York's senior art critic

Untitled, 1970. Photo: ©Estate of Miyoko Ito, Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery

The 16 paintings by Miyoko Ito on display at Matthew Marks Gallery glow densely with color, as if lit by some inner sun. The canvases of some of the best works here — most from the 1970s, painted when she was in her 50s — are nailed to the edges of the stretcher so that the raised heads are visible. This gives the paintings a studded halo, like sacred tapestries. They slow us down and accentuate our "here-ness," offering an introspective realm to enter.

Saltz, Jerry. "A Sanctuary Between Japan and America." *Vulture*, April 11, 2023.

Ito died in 1983 at the age of 65. She said she worked "sunrise to sunset," seven days a week, while raising two children in Chicago. I met her twice there in the 1970s. I remember her as being small, intense, very quiet, taking it all in at a distance, like there were ghosts in the room with her. She was one of the rulers of the Chicago roost, part of a group called the Chicago Imagists — artists who didn't work in the minimal or conceptual forms of New York and Los Angeles. Instead, they veered into figuration, cartooning, fantasy, and wild color. These artists included Jim Nutt, Gladys Nilsson, Roger Brown, Ed Paschke, Barbara Rossi, Karl Wirsum, Christina Ramberg, and Ray Yoshida. Yet even after the art world caught up to Imagism, Ito remained overlooked. She is only now starting to get her due; her art would stand out in any museum collection.

Back in the 1970s, she was not only one of the few non-white artists on the scene, but also older than her peers — an outsider among outsiders. Born to Japanese parents in 1918, her father worked as a houseboy in California. When he struggled to support his family there, Ito was taken by her mother to live with relatives near Nagoya, Japan. The family arrived September 1923, one day after the Yokohama earthquake that killed over 140,000 people. It was chaos. Her mother soon gave birth to a stillborn child.

"Everything was terribly traumatic," Ito said. "Going to school was very traumatic. I was very, very ill, extremely ill, to the point that I couldn't walk anymore." She had what she called a "childhood nervous breakdown." Of her parents, she said, "My parents were very irresponsible." Her father "grew up all by himself and he didn't know how to treat a child, and I didn't know how to behave as a child." Yet of her time in Japan, she said, "Those five years are the roots of what I am."

In 1928, Ito and her family settled in Berkeley, in a neighborhood she identified as "predominantly black" and "a third Japanese and very few whites and the whites were Portuguese." She said, "You cannot help but be race conscious when you're segregated."

One month before she graduated from UC Berkeley in 1942, Ito's family was placed in a Japanese internment camp south of San Francisco. By then, she'd met a boy her parents forbade her to see because, she said, "his brother had married a pariah, an untouchable." No matter: In 1942, the couple married to avoid being separated in the camps. While Ito was allowed to attend Smith College the following year, her husband remained interned until 1945.

In 1944, she moved to Chicago, where she spent the rest of her life. Her art career there was up and down. After being rejected from a show in 1955, she said, "To be called an old lady painter, passé at the age of 30 or 31, is very hard to take." Nevertheless, she was featured in numerous exhibitions, including the Whitney Biennial and the Carnegie International, and was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1977. She showed often in Chicago. But sales were few. "That is what I noticed about women painters," she said. "They would go on no matter what. Some men painters will become so discouraged after a big splash." Painting, she said, "is the only healing thing in my life."

At Marks, we feel the hours, days, and years she invested in her art; the circumspection, diligence, and determination. Surfaces build up like grained fresco. Creamsicle salmon colors bask in

sunshine. Paint strokes are orderly, never gestural, giving her work an underlying solidity and structure. Beads and bumps of paint accumulate, scrapes and abrasions appear, furrows form. *How* these paintings were made is as much a part of the work as what they look like. One of the most beguiling aspects of her art are the tiny spaces between her larger forms. They fill her paintings with shimmers of supernal otherness.

If those five years from her childhood in Japan lie at the root of Ito's life, they also inform her art. There are forms that resemble shrines and the ancient tomb mounds surrounding Nagoya. There is a flatness and a descending order of images that recall a calligraphic scroll. Ito is painting what Rilke has called the "inner space" that "has its being in you" — quiet sanctuaries where the past lives on.

Saltz, Jerry. "A Sanctuary Between Japan and America." *Vulture*, April 11, 2023.

The New York Review of Books

Inventories of Light

David Beal

The work of the Chicago painter Miyoko Ito is at once tightly controlled and filled with exuberant love for the medium.

April 3, 2023

Estate of Miyoko Ito/Matthew Marks Gallery
Miyoko Ito: *E for Elissa*, circa 1975

Miyoko Ito created one of the most extraordinary bodies of work in the last century of American painting. It records the growth of a lucid private vision that could only be translated to the canvas by adhering to a meticulous, sui generis technique. Ito was influential in her adopted hometown of Chicago, especially for the run of paintings she made between the early 1960s and her death at sixty-five in 1983. She has long been ignored by the other power centers of the art world. In 1975 she was included in the Whitney Biennial but otherwise has received scant attention in New York; she had two solo shows here during her lifetime, a posthumous show at Adam Baumgold Gallery in 2006, and one small but illuminating retrospective at Artists Space in 2018. Her later paintings were shown in her native Berkeley for the first time only six years ago. A volume on her work is forthcoming from Pre-Echo Press later this year, but otherwise there have been no major catalogs and little academic research on her life and career to date. A new show at Matthew Marks is her first at an A-list commercial gallery in New York since her death.

Her paintings are mysterious, allusive, playful, and profound. Objects collapse into one another and enclose off-kilter worlds inside themselves. The same forms pop up again and again, always on the verge of becoming some known thing: rooms, mountains, lakes, popsicle sticks, licorice, strands

of hair, dynamite. Much of the work has an affinity with architectural structures—prosceniums, door transoms, rafters—and with chairs, tables, drawers, wood joinery. (Ito collected old pieces of furniture that she used as models.) But it also evokes an infant's perception, in which the elements of the visible world are all the more vivid for being uncategorized in the mind and identical with the self.

The paintings generate some of their power from the tension between the wild inventiveness of their spatial design and the rhythmic consistency of their surfaces. Paint is secured to the canvas in hundreds of short, horizontal units; the even dispersal of these matte brushstrokes over green and red grounds gives them a sense of trembling luminosity and acts in counterpoint to the irregularity of Ito's shape-making. The paint is thick enough to retain its dimensionality and thin enough so that the tooth of the canvas shows through; often the original charcoal outlines are still visible between the shapes. While the paintings seem rigorously planned, their execution carefully regulated, they also seem to have been discovered in the process of their making. She spoke of each painting as "a beginning again."

Each work has a tightly controlled palette but also suggests the infinite divisibility of the chromatic spectrum. There is a spellbinding drama in her arrangement and calm modulation of planes of color: low values gradually become high values; pastel yellows and tans border saturated blues and reds. In *Sea Chest* (1972), a mustard horizon lies behind a lopsided sectional mass of undulating

Estate of Miyoko Ito/Matthew Marks Gallery

Miyoko Ito: *Heart of Hearts, Basking*, 1973

Beal, David. "Inventories of Light." *The New York Review of Books*, April 3, 2023.

red, which supports an arched portal of cerulean sliced through with a thin sliver of Verona green and surrounded by a plane of pastel pink and greenish yellow. In *E for Elissa* (circa 1975), wavelengths of green, yellow, and orange seem to vibrate inside two slightly crooked squares at the bottom of the painting. The colors shift gracefully, but their blending is not exactly diffuse. Rather, with each horizontal band, Ito loads the brush with a pigment mixture that is barely modified from the previous one. Changes in color are registered cumulatively, as if each plane were taking an inventory of the light hitting it. How Ito was able to consistently produce this surface effect is one of the most dazzling and confounding aspects of her work.

Some of Ito's canvases are nailed only halfway deep into the stretcher bars, so that dozens of closely spaced carpet tacks jut out from the sides of the painting. Why she sometimes left her canvases in this state is not really known. They may be a remnant of the preparation process; apparently she didn't mind when framers hammered in the tacks all the way. But they are somehow integral to her work. They make the paintings float off the wall, and call attention to the nature of the canvases as stretched objects, their surfaces held in suspension like drumskins. Maybe Ito, with her interest in interior domestic spaces, also liked the fact that the main purpose of canvas tacks is to fasten carpets to floors. The critic John Yau has written that they "recall the need to be able to leave quickly with what is most precious, to be able to roll it up rather than leave it behind." The tacks are also just plain cool—they make the paintings look like *Hellraiser*.

It is easy to see meditation and restraint in her art; it is also easy to sense an exuberant love of paint itself, a mischievous staging of forms, and an obsession with the repetitive motor action of brushwork. An unfinished work from 1983 (not included in the Matthew Marks show) reveals that Ito liked to paint her red grounds with a small flat brush in swirling hatch marks rather than with a wide brush and a solid fill, giving the canvases an energized, nonhomogeneous foundation. Her paintings tend to have a misty quality even when their colors are highly saturated. In the order of their surfaces, the precision of their shapes, and the subtlety of their gradients, they have a kind of tranquility. But they also suggest a restless mind trying to understand its inner workings and its place in a chaotic world.

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Ito was born in 1918 in Berkeley to parents of Japanese descent and spent part of her childhood living with her mother and sister in rural Japan, near Nagoya. "Those five years," she later said, "are the roots of what I am right now." She was ill from a young age and often bedridden, the result, she later conjectured, of a nervous breakdown. She barely escaped death in the Great Kantō earthquake of 1923. She became obsessed with landscape painting as early as first grade.

Ito's diasporic experience was in some ways aligned with that of the *Kibei Nisei* generation of Japanese Americans, children of first-generation immigrants (*Issei*) who spent some portion of their youth back in Japan—though she only spent her primary school years abroad. In a postcard to the painter Ray Yoshida from 1975, she describes how reading Yasunari Kawabata's *The Lake* "recaptured the scenes from my own years in provincial Japan." The main character in Kawabata's free-associative, erotic 1954 novel is always recalling the lake in his mother's village: "Whenever he saw that vast and deep expanse of motionless water lit suddenly by the night sky, he felt crushed by

Estate of Miyoko Ito/Matthew Marks Gallery

Miyoko Ito: *Sea Chest*, 1972

the awful mystery of nature, the agony of time. It was as if he himself had been struck by lightning and everything around him had burst with light." One imagines Ito's childhood recollections being imbued with some of this blinding intensity, which may have informed some of the visionary cast of her work.

But her art was also shaped by a long immersion in European and American modernism. When she was ten she returned to the Bay Area with her mother and sister, and she went on to study art at the University of California at Berkeley, where she gravitated toward Cézanne and Picasso and synthetic cubism. Her early work in watercolor was inspired by her association with the Berkeley School of watercolor painting. Under the influence of Hans Hofmann, these painters emphasized open planes of color as opposed to the realistic delineation of Southern California watercolorists.

In 1942, just before graduating college, Ito was incarcerated at Tanforan, a prison camp for Japanese Americans in San Bruno. She had married her boyfriend a few days before so that they would be sent to the same "assembly center." Tanforan was a horse racing track, quickly jerry-rigged into living quarters for eight thousand people. While in the camp Ito was involved in an art education program spearheaded by the painter Chiura Obata, and she came into contact with many Bay Area Japanese artists who taught there; she didn't speak about this in the few interviews she gave, but Yau claims, plausibly, that "the first supportive art world community in which Ito thrived was entirely Japanese."

Beal, David. "Inventories of Light." *The New York Review of Books*, April 3, 2023.

Ito spent less than six months at Tanforan, and one hesitates to read this period of her life too deeply into her work, but it surely stayed with her. Jordan Stein, the curator who organized the brilliant retrospective of Ito's work at the Berkeley Art Museum that traveled to Artists Space, has said that while she was incarcerated, "all she had was sky."

Many of her paintings are preoccupied with shifts in atmospheric light, weather, and time of day; she may also have been attentive to the built environment of the camps, often partially constructed by detainees.

The photographer Dorothea Lange spent time at Tanforan documenting the camp, a skeletal collection of drafty buildings that the War Relocation Authority described to detainees as guaranteeing only "food, shelter, medical care, and protection until you leave for a Relocation Center." Her photographs show long horse barracks with face-nail siding, diagonally braced doors, exposed insulation, shed roofing, crooked telephone poles, and an abundance of wood planks amid the muddy expanse of the racetrack (she was prohibited from photographing the barbed wire or surveillance towers). In the distance are the gently sloping hills of the San Francisco Peninsula. The photographs were likely commissioned to show the ostensibly humane conditions of the camps. But they telegraph an atmosphere of disorienting confinement in a wide-open landscape, and a sense of a permeable boundary between inside and outside—qualities also intrinsic to Ito's paintings.

Estate of Miyoko Ito/Matthew Marks Gallery

Miyoko Ito: *Untitled*, 1970

Beal, David. "Inventories of Light." *The New York Review of Books*, April 3, 2023.

Estate of Miyoko Ito/Matthew Marks Gallery

Miyoko Ito: *Untitled*, 1970

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Ito was released from Tanforan to attend graduate school at Smith College in the fall of 1942. She was likely assisted in her release by the Quaker-sponsored National Japanese American Student Relocation Council, which helped place students from the camps in colleges outside the West Coast; decades later, a local news article mentioned that Ito was aided by the Smith College chaplain Burns Chalmers, who had also been active in negotiating the release of Jews from concentration camps in southern France.

After a year she transferred to the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, in the city where she would spend the rest of her life. The School of the Art Institute was relatively progressive; Stein notes that it began admitting women by the end of the nineteenth century and offered classes on work outside the Western canon. The city's inclusive environment, at least in these respects, nourished Ito, and she started to show her work regularly. She also did some commercial art for State Street department stores and designed wrapping paper. In the late 1940s she began making lithographs, which made her visual approach, she said, "more linear and sort of black-and-white-oriented, harder edge." These lithographs are among the earliest artworks in the Matthew Marks show, and

although they depict actual things—trees, a bicycle, dishware, a baby—they also display what she called the "closed…construction composition" that set her work on a new path. At the same time she was making her first serious attempt to "digest the process of oil painting."

By the early 1950s she had two children, and she spent much of the decade "pretty much isolated," raising her family. In a 1951 article she said she intended to use some recently awarded fellowship money to "hire a housekeeper and some baby-sitters." She still painted every day even after she converted her home studio to a nursery, and her paintings from this era show her developing her distinctive approach to form, underpainting, and brushwork that would reach a breakthrough around the start of the 1960s. The lower right section of *Act One by the Sea* (circa 1955) is an aggregation of orange and brown rendered in short brush marks (vertically directional, for now) over a bluish ground; slightly gappy white lines give the impression that the shapes are stitched together. It's a modernist genre painting, but it intimates some of what's to come.

As she refined her methods and her paintings grew more idiosyncratic, Ito became loosely associated with the burgeoning movement of Chicago Imagism. She shared these painters' gallerist, Phyllis Kind, and what Stein calls "their zeal for the subliminal juxtaposition, logic-defying representation, and technical precision of Surrealism," if not their wondrous irreverence. In a 1983 essay, Ito's friend the painter Vera Klement wrote that Chicago aesthetics in the 1960s were "polarized between imagism and abstraction," but that "Miyoko had taken her place on a higher ledge, a precarious point of balance between the two." Still, Ito was a warm presence on the Chicago scene. According to Stein, the painter Gladys Nilsson described once seeing her with her socks inside out; Ito said she thought it "just looked a lot better that way, with the stitching revealed."

By the 1970s she had settled into a rhythm of producing about one painting a month, each formatted at an approachable, nonmonumental scale, often around four feet by three and a half feet. She survived breast cancer and had a double mastectomy, and she spoke candidly of another nervous breakdown she had as an adult. Her work from these years is her crowning achievement. Paintings like *River of Pediment* (1972), *Heart of Hearts, Basking* (1973), and *Act One in the Desert* (1977) seem bound by a set of secret rules developed only through a long and resolute devotion to the act of applying paint. In their funky and exacting geometric conception, their sense of visual possibility, their fastidious attention to the tactility of light, and their radiant intelligence, these paintings model both a sense of humility before the medium and a rich inner freedom.

In 1978 Ito was interviewed on camera by Lyn Blumenthal and Kate Horsfield, two fellow Chicago artists; it's the only known footage of her. She speaks for nearly an hour about how painting has centered her life. There is something in her tone—her long pauses and small exclamations, her disarming smile and lack of pretense—that sheds light on the elusive poignancy of her art. Painting is "like breathing," she tells them. "It's a necessity, it's do or die…Every time I have a problem…I go deeper and deeper into it. I have no place to take myself except painting…it's been my biggest life-giving force." ●

"Miyoko Ito" is at **Matthew Marks** through April 15.

Beal, David. "Inventories of Light." *The New York Review of Books*, April 3, 2023.

The New York Times

C10 N THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, MARCH 31, 2023

Galleries

ESTATE OF MIYOKO ITO; VIA MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

"Untitled," 1970, by Miyoko Ito. Our critic writes that her art has that speechless beauty that emerges only when, as Friedrich Schiller had it, "sensuality and reason, duty and inclination, are harmonized."

Miyoko Ito

Through April 15. Matthew Marks Gallery, 522 West 22 Street, Manhattan; 212-243-0200, matthewmarks.com

In 2018, the nonprofit Artists Space reacquainted New Yorkers with the Chicago painter Miyoko Ito (1918-1983), whose singular abstractions had mostly been held in Midwestern confidence. Five years after that rediscovery, her paintings are back in New York, at Matthew Marks, where 16 beautiful exercises of restrained carnality call for a silent pilgrimage.

Born in Berkeley, Calif., Ito had to abandon her education in 1942, when she was interned with other Japanese Americans at the Tanforan Assembly Center. She recommenced her studies after her release, but health troubles and family obligations prevented her from painting full-time until the 1970s. What she then made were structured abstractions of gently curved solids, pinstriped bands and rectangles rounded off at the top like gravestones.

Each painting is built up, layer by contrasting layer, and most suggest receding spaces, even classical landscapes, wholly unlike the flat forms of postwar American abstraction. Irregularly, Ito stopped short when hammering some canvases to the stretcher bars, letting the nails protrude like a marquee. Also irregular is her palette, a twilit, sublimely weird range whose best description might be adult. Muffled green.

Farago, Jason. "Miyoko Ito." *The New York Times,* March 31, 2023, p. C10.

Muted magenta. Amber, but a little softer. Apricot, but a little darker.

Ito's colors are erotic, but also modest; they draw from Giorgio Morandi's dampened tones, they prefigure the ugly-chic palette of Miuccia Prada; but what on earth are their proper names? The green-gray of goose droppings. The fuchsia of the sky 10 minutes before sunset .... Ito's art has that speechless beauty that emerges only when, as Friedrich Schiller had it, "sensuality and reason, duty and inclination, are harmonized." *JASON FARAGO*

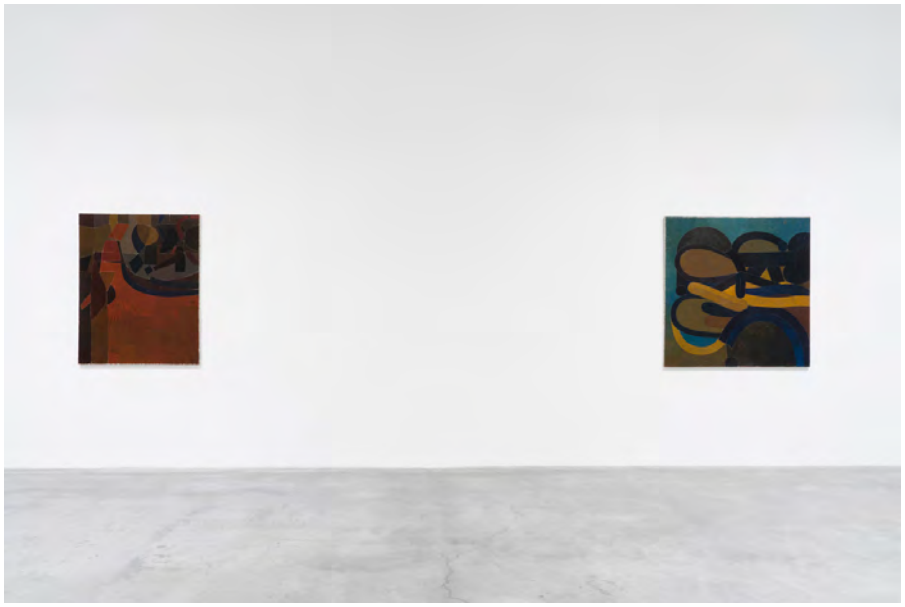
Farago, Jason. "Miyoko Ito." *The New York Times,* March 31, 2023, p. C10.

4Columns

Miyoko Ito

Jennifer Krasinski

Otherworldly evocations of space and the natural world in a retrospective of nineteen works.



Miyoko Ito, installation view. Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery. © Estate of Miyoko Ito. Pictured, left: *Act One by the Sea*, ca. 1955. Right: *Jordan*, ca. 1959.

Miyoko Ito, *Matthew Marks Gallery, 522 West Twenty-Second Street, New York City, through April 15, 2023*

• • •

There is simply no other painter like Miyoko Ito. *None*. Not now, not in her lifetime. Yet even a singular hand doesn't come from nowhere: the show of sixteen paintings and three lithographs currently on view at Matthew Marks makes vivid how Ito developed her very own brand of contemplative abstractions—

Krasinski, Jennifer. "Miyoko Ito." *4Columns*, March 17, 2023.

dazzling, dreamlike spaces. Born in 1918, she was an art student in the late 1930s, devouring the lessons of Surrealism and Synthetic Cubism, the hangover from which can be seen in the accomplished if relatively dutiful still lifes *Easel and Table* (1948) and *Act One by the Sea* (ca. 1955). Ito also counted (the nearly inescapable teachings of) painter Hans Hofmann as an influence. His most widely atomized belief: "Only from the varied counterplay of push and pull, and from its variation in intensities, will plastic creation result." According to Hofmann, a painter's perpetual balancing and unbalancing of color, composition, and other elementals is what animates art with something like a life force, aerating otherwise absolute materiality with spiritual possibility.

The world invariably does its damnedest to blunt possibility. Of painting, Ito once said: "It is the only healing thing in my life. No matter what." The daughter of Japanese émigrés, Ito grew up in Japan and Northern California. In 1942, one month before she was to graduate from the University of California, Berkeley, she and her husband, Harry Ichiyasu, were sent to an internment camp. The following year, having been granted her diploma, she enrolled in graduate school at Smith College in part so that she could leave the camp. (Though she wanted to return, the West Coast remained "off-limits" at that time to all Japanese.) In 1944, she moved to study at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago; Ichiyasu was finally released and joined her in 1945. They lived in Chicago until she died in 1983.

Miyoko Ito, *Untitled*, 1970. Oil on canvas, 48 × 46 inches. Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery. © Estate of Miyoko Ito.

Krasinski, Jennifer. "Miyoko Ito." *4Columns*, March 17, 2023.

Miyoko Ito, installation view. Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery. © Estate of Miyoko Ito. Pictured, right: *Untitled*, 1970.

Ito was an impeccable conductor, not just of color and line and form, but of attention. She knew how to call an eye to an artwork, compelling it to look and keep looking, encouraging it also to rest and enjoy the view. The gruff, grand Donald Judd—known for his point-blank prose and exacting opinions as to whose art was, and was not, worth regarding—positively reviewed a show of her work at New York's Zabriskie Gallery in 1961 for *Arts Magazine*, remarking: "The details are subtle and inventive . . . Each composition is distinct and interesting." I would add to that: hypnotic, exquisite, and quietly gutsy. Ito would begin her paintings by drawing on canvas in red and green, improvising sometimes for two or three weeks before the work would reveal itself. Later she deployed charcoal, because, in her words, "it erases but also leaves traces." (Anyone in the mood to geek out about the covert operations of underpainting—those preliminary marks, hues, and layers that can be spied here and there beneath her lines and brushstrokes—will have ample chances to get deep.)

The earlier paintings in the show, such as *Jordan* (ca. 1959) and *Yellow Sea* (1959), are searching, solemn Modernist master-grapplers, intimating very little of the meticulous tranquility of what's to come. Ito appears to make a decisive if organic transition with *Flight into Landscape* (1960), which ensnares the viewer in a loose knot of undulating lines and shapes—call them hillocks and valleys in the spirit of the title, which nods to a transition, too, perhaps from the subject of sea to landscape, or at least from one place to another. *Flight*'s palette is dominated by marigolds that darken into oranges and ochres. The eye

is occasionally grounded by a brown, or popped right in the pupil by a seething red. Two half-moons, one a green-gray, the other a deep forest green, momentarily cradle your attention before you naturally rejoin the whirl. Warmth abounds.

There are no other works on view from the 1960s, which leaves a gaping hole in the show's albeit very informal narrative arc. Its timeline picks up again with three canvases dated 1970—two are *Untitled*, the third, *Untitled #126*—that land viewers at the height of Ito's prowess. By then, she was painting otherworldly constructions—or are they excavations?—that draw in equal measure from architectural elements and the natural world. One question these compositions call to mind over and over again: What, if anything, distinguishes the interior from the exterior? In the trio of paintings from 1970, she plays with a common form, the arch, which you can look in, look at, and look through, sometimes all at once. In *Sea Chest* (1972), the arch becomes both window and mirror, bleeding one world into the next. The following year's *Heart of Hearts, Basking* (1973) is a showstopper of the highest order, leaving behind the delights of such visual gamesmanship in favor of a purer experience of space. There is only a *there* there—which is, to this eye, the highest achievement of abstraction.

But then there are her magnificent skies, which, when not appearing overhead, are evoked by the ever-present color gradients Ito seems to have modeled after sunrise and sunset, no matter the hues she used. Her devotion here is painterly as well as personal: as Jordan Stein—curator of *Miyoko Ito: Heart of Hearts*, a 2018 exhibition of her work at Artists Space in New York—beautifully noted: "while incarcerated, all she had was sky." See the cerulean blue that descends through pink and finally turns

Miyoko Ito, installation view. Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery. © Estate of Miyoko Ito. Pictured: *Flight into Landscape*, 1960.

Miyoko Ito, *Heart of Hearts, Basking*, 1973. Oil on canvas, 44 × 31 7/8 inches. Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery. © Estate of Miyoko Ito.

Miyoko Ito, installation view. Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery. © Estate of Miyoko Ito. Pictured, left: *Act One in the Desert*, 1977. Right: *Sea Chest*, 1972.

brown as it nears the bottom of *Act One in the Desert* (1977), a work that recalls the arid backgrounds of Dalí and Tanguy. While Midwestern skies serve up blues that dissolve into browns, it's California that radiates the pinks—a detail that loosely places us somewhere in memory. Toward the top of the canvas hovers a stubby comet—a circle trailed by a tail. This small thing appears variously throughout Ito's paintings—more often than not resembling spermatozoa—and is as close as the artist gets to a recurring figure. It wriggles and punctuates, even punctures, her work, bringing to the surface the understated forward momentum that drives—that is counterforce to—its blissful stillness.

Jennifer Krasinski is a writer and critic based in Brooklyn.

Krasinski, Jennifer. "Miyoko Ito." *4Columns*, March 17, 2023.

wttw

The Quiet Art and Twisting Life of a Chicago-Based Japanese American Painter

Daniel Hautzinger
MAY 26, 2021

Miyoko Ito. Chinoiserie, 1970. Courtesy The Elmhurst University Art Collection

Miyoko Ito's life was full of tumult, but you might not guess it from her quiet artwork. External events rocked her younger years, internal struggle shadowed her life, and a sordid saga brought her name into the tabloids after her death. Much of her art, however, contains deliberate, pastel-hued abstractions in planar arrangements infused with light—she preferred painting in the early morning. "Ito's touch was delicate even when color was hot," said the *Chicago Tribune*. Unsettled psychology may lie within, but the physical surface is generally careful and controlled.

She was born in Berkeley, California in 1918, to Japanese parents who were first cousins in an arranged marriage. Her father had come to California as a child and found a home at a church in Vallejo, where he worked as a houseboy for his lodgings. He studied at the University of California,

Berkeley thanks to the financing of a Japanese restaurateur whom he had impressed.

He eventually returned to Japan to marry his fiancée, a schoolteacher, who soon followed him to California. She then made her own trip back to Japan with Ito and a second daughter when Ito was five. They were welcomed the day after they arrived by a devastating earthquake that killed over 100,000 people.

Ito's five years in Japan were both troubled and invigorating, in her own telling. "Those five years are the roots of what I am right now," she told an oral historian late in her life. By her account, she was ill most of the time, perhaps as the result of a nervous breakdown, from which she would suffer again in later life. (She also survived breast cancer.) Her illiterate grandmother cared for her. She was immersed in the arts—calligraphy, creative writing, landscape painting—at school, excelling in them even at that young age.

Her family returned to her father in Berkeley when she was ten. She struggled to master English and lost her ability to speak (but not read) Japanese in the process. (She said she had to "suppress" Japanese in order to learn English.)

She left her family home in a segregated, predominantly Black neighborhood to attend the University of California, Berkeley, paying her way and studying painting in the school's small art department. She met her future husband, Harry Ichiyasu, within a few days of studying there.

Ito quickly married Ichiyasu during her senior year in 1942 to prevent being separated when the United States government detained Japanese Americans in internment camps as the country entered World War II. Soon before she was due to graduate, Ito and Ichiyasu were sent to the Tanforan Assembly Center near San Francisco together to be processed for internment.

While there, at the behest of Ichiyasu, she applied for graduate school—in part as a way to escape internment. She was accepted by Smith College in Massachusetts, despite being the only graduate student in art there. "If anything we were learning from each other," she said in her oral history of her "very novice instructor."

At a time of suspicion towards Japanese Americans, she traveled across the country by train, a young woman alone, visiting the Art Institute while changing trains in Chicago.

She thought her husband would soon follow, but instead he was sent to an internment camp in Utah. Because he had worked as a sales agent for a Japanese brewery, he was considered extra suspicious and would remain detained until 1945.

On her own in more ways than one, Ito forged ahead, mounting her first solo exhibition at Smith. The separation between her art and her husband continued throughout her life; her artist friends almost never saw Ichiyasu at events. But the marriage was loving: "Being married to Harry was so much better than I ever thought marriage could be," she wrote.

Ito soon retraced her exodus from California, stopping this time where she had changed trains to study at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago. Ichiyasu eventually joined her; they would settle

in Hyde Park and have two children, and she would live the rest of her life here.

She became a steady part of Chicago's artistic scene, with a 1980 retrospective at the Renaissance Society naming her "almost universally admired among the various factions of Chicago art." She was close friends with Don Baum, an important curator in the city.

She also befriended and influenced a group of younger artists who, in part under Baum's wing, became known as the Imagists and made Chicago art known around the country. While Ito's work was more abstract (and therefore less popular) than the zany, pop culture-filled figuration of the Imagists, numerous commentators have observed a connection. Ito "sort of hovered in between a formal point of view and the rich symbolism and imagery of the Chicago Imagists," Baum said, while a catalog for a 2018 Ito show argues that, "Ito shared the Imagists' zeal for the subliminal juxtaposition, logic-defying representation, and technical precision of Surrealism. Ito and the younger artists successfully fused Pop Art's feverish palette with an eccentric, outsider air."

Perhaps because her work wasn't easily pigeonholed into a dominant genre, Ito never found widespread success. "It's very hard to take really when you're age thirty and you're sort of dismissed as an old lady painter," she told the oral historian. The Met accepted a watercolor early in her career; she participated in Chicago-area shows such as Exhibition Momentum; had the occasional solo show, like at Baum's Hyde Park Art Center in 1971; and has work in the collections of the Art Institute and Smithsonian Art Museum, among others. (A painting from the Museum of Contemporary Art hung in the office of Rahm Emanuel when he was mayor.)

She did receive a good deal of attention after her death in 1983, but not for her work. In 1986, a promising young art collector and dealer named Kenneth Walker was tried for stealing three artworks from Ito's home after Ichiyasu noticed they were missing: a Picasso etching, a wooden African fetish dog, and an etching by Giorgio Morandi, whose emotionally invested still-lifes garner comparisons to Ito's work. In a dramatic court trial, Walker claimed to have had an affair with Ito beginning in 1973, when he was a 21-year-old student at the School of the Art Institute and she was a 55-year-old established painter. "Not your ordinary love affair, maybe the kind you read about," Walker's lawyer said, describing the alleged relationship as "mystical."

Walker said Ito had gifted him the works before her death. He had already sold the Picasso. He was found innocent, to the surprise of many, but faced further civil charges and damages from Ichiyasu, as well as unrelated criminal charges in connection with the theft of work from a gallery where he had been director.

In the wake of his arrests, Walker visited a psychiatric ward three times, including after a possible suicide attempt. Later in 1986, he went to the shore of Lake Michigan near Belmont Harbor, doused himself with gasoline, and lit himself on fire. The immediate story of Ito's cool art ended in a fiery suicide.

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ARTFORUM

THE ARTISTS' ARTISTS

To take stock of the past year, Artforum *asked an international group of artists to select a single exhibition or event that most memorably captured their eye in 2018.*

Kim Brandt

Miyoko Ito (Artists Space, New York) How erroneous that the opportunity to see "Heart of Hearts," a selection of work by Miyoko Ito (1918–1983) occurred so long after she was alive and working—but it's better late than never, thanks to curator Jordan Stein. Her paintings evoke objects, times, and places that are familiar but also not—windows framing a vista might be mirrors reflecting the artist's inhabited space; forms oscillate from landscape to figure and back again. Tacks protruded from the sides of several frames, as though the paintings were bursting at the seams. Maybe they're about to come undone, or maybe they were never fixed—like a memory, a mind, or a body, they are powerfully vulnerable in their honesty. For anyone presently interested in abstraction, and in dismantling the white patriarchal narrative of American art history, this exhibition was most crucial.

Miyoko Ito, *Mandarin, or the Red Empress*, 1977, oil on canvas, 46 × 41".

Brandt, Kim. "Best of 2018: The Artists' Artists." *Artforum* 57, No. 4, December 2018.

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ARTFORUM

Miyoko Ito, *Heart of Hearts, Basking*, 1973, oil on canvas, 44 x 31".

Miyoko Ito

ARTISTS SPACE

In the painting *Heart of Hearts, Basking*, 1973, the viewer finds herself in an immensurable yet sensuous concrete space. In the extreme foreground, two molten pools of red paint swell upward, dammed on either side by brown embankments and above by a barrier of stacked elongated cylinders. A sweeping, prohibitive diagonal line girdles the picture, its upper register marked by a rectangular aperture that opens onto contiguous passages of tan and translucent blue that reflexively read as sand, sea, and sky. As this distant, elusive beach materializes, and categorical distinctions of abstraction and figuration tire and give out, both terms disclose their fragility and codependence.

This painting provided both the title and the tone of the first New York institutional exhibition of the work of the artist Miyoko Ito (1918–1983). Until now, she was little known outside her adopted hometown of Chicago. Forgoing both Abstract Expressionism's cult of the painterly gesture and the mass-culture imagery of Pop, Ito's work and legacy slipped between the cracks of these two dominant modes of postwar painting. Although she was friendly with, and sometimes exhibited alongside, the Chicago Imagists, her restrained, glacial atmospheres were temperamentally distant from these younger artists' comic-grotesque figuration. "To be called an old-lady painter, passé, at age thirty, thirty-one, is very hard to take," the artist recalled in a 1978 interview, "At the same time, I had no choice."

Born in Berkeley, California, in 1918 to Japanese parents, Ito spent her early childhood in Japan, where she was exposed to a strict traditional education emphasizing calligraphy and painting. She returned

Wyma, Chloe. "Miyoko Ito." *Artforum,* June 2018.

to the West Coast as a teenager, studying watercolor at the University of California, Berkeley, in what she would later describe as a "snobbish" modernist style that fused elements of Synthetic Cubism, Cézannian Post-Impressionism, and the color theory of Hans Hofmann. Ito's studies were interrupted by the outbreak of World War II, when she and her husband were interned at Tanforan Racetrack near San Francisco under President Franklin Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066, which resulted in the incarceration of approximately 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry.

The thirteen paintings at Artists Space were made long after this disgraceful chapter in American history. The earliest, *Kalamazoo*, 1959—with its jolly jumble of bio- and zoomorphic forms—demonstrates Ito's early-career interest in Paul Klee, and in the Surrealist-era works of Picasso. A nine-year caesura separates Ito's early paintings from the arid, sunset-colored topography of *Gorodiva*, 1968,where her idiosyncratic interpretation of late Cubism dissolves into an austere landscape of ombré-style gradients and scallop-edged forms. Dunes and runnels in subtly calibrated pink, green, and yellow cascade from a valise-like shape enclosing bands of dusty rose-colored strata. Space, only tentatively suggested in *Kalamazoo*, is here compartmentalized and multidimensional. Windows, arches, and thresholds open onto abstract vistas and cavities that evoke both sprawling terrains and depthless psychological interiors.

"Every time I have a problem, I go deeper and deeper into painting," Ito once said. "I have no place to take myself except painting." Given the dislocation, internment, and belatedness that mark the artist's biography, it's significant that Ito understood her medium in explicitly spatial, situated terms—as a "place" to be entered and inhabited, from her palatial, arabesque-crowned *Island in the Sun*, 1978, to the bleached container of *Walls of No Escape*, 1980. These cerebral prisons and palaces also mark new destinations in a decentered, vastly expanded and enriched history of modernism, now coming into view.

—*Chloe Wyma*

Wyma, Chloe. "Miyoko Ito." *Artforum,* June 2018.

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the PARIS REVIEW

Light Effects: On Miyoko Ito's Abstract Inventions

By Dan Nadel May 21, 2018 ARTS & CULTURE

***CENTER STAGE*, 1980, OIL ON CANVAS.**

In the fifties, when she was in her early thirties, Miyoko Ito was "called an old lady painter, passe." She recalled the slight when she was sixty and nearing the end of her life, yet still decades away from recognition. Now, thirty-five years after her death, her work looks positively avant-garde for any time. Paintings from her most inventive period, the seventies and early eighties, were recently the subject of "Heart of Hearts" at Artists Space in New York, curated by Jordan Stein. (The show originated at the Berkeley Art Museum and

Nadel, Dan. "Light Effects: On Miyoko Ito's Abstract Inventions." *The Paris Review,* May 21, 2018.

Pacific Film Archive.) Ito's work is brilliantly sui generis: it touches on the familiar styles of surrealism, minimal abstraction, and synthetic cubism to create meditative color spaces of intermingling forms that allude to landscapes, sexual organs, and urban architecture.

For decades, Ito, who spent her adult life in Chicago, has been a kind of cult figure for certain painters and critics (myself included). She was an outlier: Ito made abstract paintings at a time when her adopted city was mostly interested in figuration, and unlike many of her younger peers, she did not exhibit with a consistent group of artists. She also made her finest work at a time when painting as a medium and surrealism as a mode had been critically discredited.

Island in the Sun, 1978, exemplifies the qualities that make her work both prescient and, at the time, critically unfavorable. Like much of her painting, it comprises a vocabulary of colorful undulations, jutting triangles, crosscurrent patterns, semicircles, and short, wavy lines. It is thickly painted, each color mixed with a palette knife and usually applied from right to left. Slats of color form the primary structure—a triangle—and the entire construction rests atop multicolor horizontal planes, one blending into the next. The pale-blue rectangle in the center of the painting indicates a window, but above it sits an ominous mound that seems to recede into a space unconnected from the rest of the image. *Island*, like Ito's other paintings, is a landscape that both entices (that bright-red tip at the top of the mound) and discourages (all those steps to climb).

The works in this exhibition display great structural precision, with a delicacy worthy of Ito's beloved Giorgio Morandi, whose still lifes are made up of soft forms bathed in a hazy light that seems always on the verge of fading away entirely. "When I approach a canvas I try to as much as possible keep my mind blank," she once said. "And I draw with charcoal over and over and over again. I like the charcoal because it erases, and it also leaves traces. And eventually my eyes will pick up the leftover lines. And if I find the image I like, I'll keep that image … I remember in the beginning it would take two or three weeks to find an image that I

LEFT: *ISLAND IN THE SUN*, 1978, OIL ON CANVAS. RIGHT: MIYOKO ITO.

Nadel, Dan. "Light Effects: On Miyoko Ito's Abstract Inventions." *The Paris Review,* May 21, 2018.

would want to paint." *Island in the Sun* is rigorously composed, yet the picture becomes interesting because it remains slightly off-kilter. The lines that delineate the construction fade in and out; the luminous colors change gradually or suddenly; space opens up, but never in a literal sense—it is always, like the work of Paul Klee, a flat field. There is a sense that the final painting is the result of constant brushwork and deliberation, like a writer spending weeks on a single sentence. By the seventies, Ito was in the studio seven days a week, all day; she typically made one painting at a time, completing one each month.

Center Stage, 1980, offers a tremendous amount of space within several circumscribed areas. The central area, which is the picture's most serene space, sits on a perch and modulates from mauve to light pink to nude; these changing tones are framed by thick brown and blue curves, which in turn are surrounded by a band of color, lining three sides of the canvas, that alternates from purple to burnt orange to magenta. Ito seems to suggest both that maintaining calm requires a heavily fortified exterior and that even arriving at that space of peace entails traversing difficult, if not impossible, obstacles. *Iliad*, 1981, animates a Léger-like tube on the verge of entering a vaginal form atop amorphous fleshy hills. The atmosphere is autumnal; the action is unabashedly erotic. "I am essentially synthetic," Ito said. "My roots are in synthetic cubism, but I don't want that to show too much. And Chicago gave me a sense of surrealism, although it is not that obvious." She was conscious that there was "content" in her paintings, by which she meant objects—such as (unintentional) landscapes, mirrors, chairs—but she clearly was most interested in forms that could not be easily described. She considered herself a person of circumscribed interests in the midst of a life that was at times a test of her own endurance. "It's been a straight and narrow path all my life," she said. "And it has been a long time."

The eldest of two children, Ito was born in Berkeley, California, to Japanese parents in 1918, just after the end of World War I. Her time in California was spent in the Japanese community, which kept itself separate as a preventative measure against the kind of persecution that was legislated two decades later. From 1923 to 1928, she lived with her mother, grandmother, and sister in Japan and recalled barely escaping the 1923 Tokyo earthquake, having gone to the countryside the day before. Ito excelled at reading, calligraphy, and watercolor painting in school, and though she didn't consider it influential on her later work, it's hard not to see that early education in achieving luminosity in color and fluidity in lines as crucial to her later paint application and attention to sinuous kanji-like marks. Ito was ill for essentially her entire time in Japan, so much so that she couldn't walk. The cause was unknown: "It finally came out, after all these years, that it was probably a childhood nervous breakdown." After returning to Berkeley, she attended the University of California, where she felt at home in the art department; she studied watercolor painting under now obscure Western landscape masters such as Worth Ryder and Erle Loran. Ito was to graduate in May 1942 but was sent in April to Tanforan—a racetrack turned internment camp in San Bruno—together with her new husband. She spoke little about her imprisonment.

When she was released in 1943, she conducted a year of postgraduate work at Smith College and then another at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1944. Her husband remained imprisoned until 1945, at which point he joined her in Chicago. But she faced fresh difficulties over the next few decades. She was a stay-at-home mother to her two children and endured breast cancer and a double mastectomy. She was able to turn to painting full-time only in the seventies, around which time she experience another mental collapse. "I knew since I was five years old that I would have a nervous breakdown," Ito once said of the pain she had withstood in Japan and in America. "I kept on postponing. I did have periods of very difficult times, but finally I did relax and have a nervous breakdown to my heart's content … I had total control of myself, and I knew what was happening. So I did see so much of Paul Klee, Redon, and all the others in that few days of (using the vernacular) freaking out." She viewed painting as therapy when she was ill, and never stopped. Acutely aware

ILIAD, 1981, OIL ON CANVAS.

of herself as a "female" painter and colorist, she also saw a strength in the gender gap: "I think that is what I have noticed about women painters. They would go on no matter what. Some men painters will become so discouraged after a bit of a splash."

If Ito felt out of step throughout her career, her Chicago colleagues and friends were likewise out of place and time. They were highly educated and inclusive artists: Whitney Halstead, Evelyn Statsinger, Tom Kapsalis, Vera Berdich, and a young Ray Yoshida among them. With the exception of Statsinger and Ito, these artists were educators as well, and all engaged in private language building, an activity that would become so important to the next generation of Chicago artists, including Christina Ramberg, Jim Nutt, Roger Brown, and Suellen Rocca. It is through these artists that Ito's name has remained present, and perhaps we owe the current interest in her work to the recent and long-overdue recognition of these masters. An encounter with her oeuvre begs numerous questions about how art history is made, but most of all, this exhibition was a rare chance to experience the exquisite spaces, erotics, and allusive forms in her canvases.

(Ito's quotes are taken from a video interview conducted by Kate Horsfield in 1978. The transcript was published in Profile 4, no. 1, January 1984.)

Dan Nadel is a writer and curator based in New York. He is the author of The Collected Hairy Who Publications*, 1966–1969 and, most recently, Chris Martin: Paintings.*

Nadel, Dan. "Light Effects: On Miyoko Ito's Abstract Inventions." *The Paris Review,* May 21, 2018.

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THE NEW YORKER

ART GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Miyoko Ito

Through May 6.

Artists Space
11 Cortland Alley
Downtown

This transporting exhibition will likely be your introduction to Ito's cerebral and beautiful paintings: until her death, in 1983, the Berkeley-born artist remained little known outside her adopted home town of Chicago, where she was both celebrated and an outlier. Her idiosyncratic style is deftly described in an accompanying essay by Jordan Stein as "at once first-person and topographic." Ito's canvases verge on representation—of landscapes, interiors, and machines—while also appearing to be in a state of subtle flux. In the dusky "Gorodiva," from 1968, a winsome hybrid form (perhaps a protozoan absorbing a valise) seems to undulate, an effect achieved with the meticulous application of thinly painted ombré layers. Similarly, the green-gold stack of tubes in an untitled piece from 1971-72, which has some kinship with the work of Ito's fellow-Chicagoan Ray Yoshida, seems to sway as shifting light drapes it in partial shadow.

— *The New Yorker*

"Miyoko Ito." *The New Yorker,* May 7, 2018, p. 10.

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Frieze

Your Guide to the Best Shows to See in New York

Senior US Editor Andrew Durbin selects his highlights of the shows in the city during Frieze Week

BY **ANDREW DURBIN** IN **CRITIC'S GUIDES** | 01 MAY 18

Miyoko Ito, 'Heart of Hearts'
Artists Space
7 April – 6 May

This year marks the centenary of Miyoko Ito's birth, on 27 April 1918, in Berkeley, California. In a perfect world, this date would have received more attention than it did, with celebrations of this unjustly under-known painter's curious, abstract paintings, made mostly when she was living in Chicago and rarely shown outside that city. 'Heart of Hearts' builds on a concurrent retrospective exhibition 'Matrix 267' at the University of California's Berkeley Art Museum, and takes a closer look at Ito's work from the 1970s and early-'80s, near the end of her life. (The artist died in 1983.) Working around the time of Chicago Imagism, Ito's paintings nod to the group's design-y, humorous tableaux while providing a more sombre, challenging visual cosmology of ovular and cylindrical shapes arranged like slatted furniture, walls and suggestive windows

Miyoko Ito, *Gorodiva*, 1968, oil on canvas, 1.2 x 1.2 cm. Courtesy: Artists Space, New York and Karen Lennox Gallery, Chicago

that view some southwestern dream world, in desert reds, yellows and oranges. The paint is thinly applied to canvas, which, at Artists Space, are sometimes torn at the seams – likely, it seems, from lack of care on the part of a collector than from the artist's intention. Nails are driven only partially into the stretcher bars, and jut starkly out of the sides of some paintings, as in *Todoroki* (1974). While each painting (varying in size; averaging around 50 x 50 cm) is an unmistakable masterpiece, the connections they attempt to bridge between an outside and an inside, furniture and room, room and house, house and world feel necessarily incomplete, blurred, undone. This suggests there is more to be imagined.

Durbin, Andrew. "Your Guide to the Best Shows to See in New York." *Frieze*, May 1, 2018.

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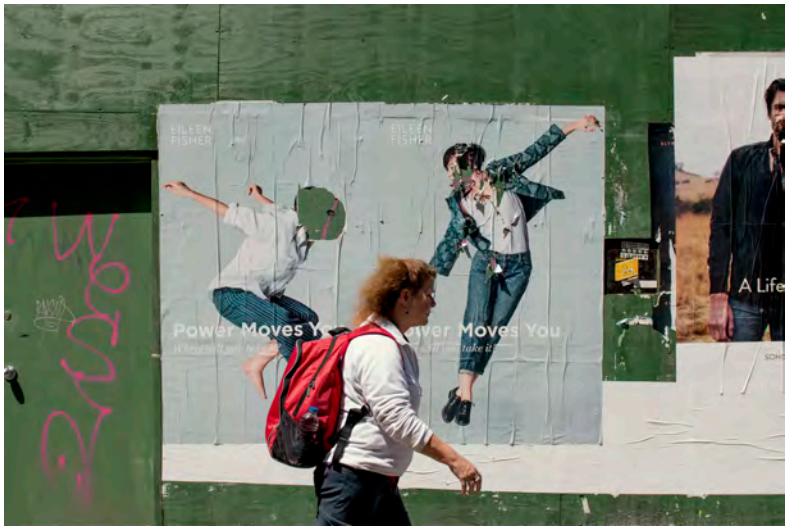
The New York Times

10 Galleries to Visit Now Around SoHo and TriBeCa

By Jason Farago
April 26, 2018



Galleries have moved into one of Lower Manhattan's last ungentrified zones, giving it fresh energy. Vincent Tullo for The New York Times

And so the hottest gallery neighborhood in New York is … nowhere in particular! With rents ever higher in Chelsea's old garages and the Lower East Side's tenements, nearly a dozen homesteading dealers have moved to a few blocks of *terra nullius* hemmed in by SoHo, TriBeCa and the Civic Center. Centered on Walker Street, these galleries — a mix of Chelsea refugees, peripatetic veterans of downtown and a few new kids — have imparted fresh energy to one of Lower Manhattan's last ungentrified zones.

This downtown ramble begins in NoHo, where three strong galleries cluster on Great Jones Street. Then cross Houston Street; though boutiques long ago supplanted artists in SoHo, some interesting art spaces remain. Work your way east once you're below Canal, and, if you're up for more after the last stop, scarf down some dumplings and strut into Chinatown, home to young galleries like 56 Henry, MEN and New Release.

Farago, Jason. "10 Galleries to Visit Now Around SoHo and TriBeCa." *The New York Times*, April 26, 2018.

TriBeCa

ARTISTS SPACE *through May 6*; 55 Walker Street, artistsspace.org. It hasn't yet moved into its new permanent home on White Street, but this enduring nonprofit, led now by Jay Sanders, the Whitney's performance alumnus, is doing what it does best from its Walker Street rental: essential shows by emerging artists and by historical figures too little celebrated. The Chicago painter Miyoko Ito (1918-1983), who was born in Berkeley and interned during World War II, is one of the latter: her strange abstract paintings, informed as much by Giorgio Morandi's sallow still lifes as by the legacy of Surrealism, come as a revelation. In a palette of chartreuse, ocher, cinnamon and gamboge, Ito overlaid uncommon shapes, such as a rectangle rounded and pinched at the top like a loaf of Wonder Bread, into compositions of preternatural calm.

Clockwise from top, 1. blank; 2. An untitled piece by Aaron Williams, whose solo exhibition, "Primitive Man," is on view through April 29 at MEN gallery on Monroe Street; 3. Jenna Westra's "Hand Squeezing Lemon Into Open Mouth, Onlooker" at Lubov; 4. Galleries have moved into one of Lower Manhattan's last ungentrified zones, giving it fresh energy; 5. Miyoko Ito's "Heart of Hearts" show at Artists Space. Vincent Tullo for The New York Times

Farago, Jason. "10 Galleries to Visit Now Around SoHo and TriBeCa." *The New York Times*, April 26, 2018.

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THE BROOKLYN RAIL
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARTS, POLITICS, AND CULTURE

ArtSeen

Miyoko Ito

MAY 2006

By John Yau

Adam Baumgold
March 17–April 30, 2006

Miyoko Ito, "Untitled (132)," 1972. Courtesy of Adam Baumgold.

While the paintings of Miyoko Ito (1918–1983) have been included in most survey exhibitions and books about Chicago art from 1945 to 1995, she still remains under known in Chicago, and all but invisible in New York. The last time she had a solo show here was 1978. The reasons for Ito's lack of recognition are complex, but they would include the fact that she first hit her stride in the 1950s without incorporating images derived from mass culture. The subsequent emergence of Pop and Minimalism had almost no effect on Ito's work of the 60s and 70s, which was the focus of this exhibition. Thus, in contrast to her younger Chicago contemporaries and, in many cases, friends and fans (Roger Brown, Gladys Nilsson, and Jim Nutt), Ito developed a largely abstract vocabulary to evoke an alternative world. She was neither a pure abstractionist nor did she work flatly, which meant she went against the grain. In addition, she carefully suggested space, which for an abstract artist working between the 50s and the 70s was artistically akin to announcing that you

Yau, John. "Miyoko Ito." *The Brooklyn Rail*, May 2006.

had leprosy in a crowded auditorium. In her art, she both embraced and celebrated the isolation that had been foisted on her in life.

Born in California, Ito's parents returned to Japan in the 1920s so that she and her sister could have a traditional Japanese education that included calligraphy and art lessons. She studied art at the University of California, Berkeley until shortly after Pearl Harbor, when she was imprisoned in a Japanese-American internment camp. While at Berkeley, Ito saw a large retrospective of Picasso, which had a profound influence on her work. Despite her internment, she managed to continue her education and eventually attended Smith. In 1944, she received a scholarship to study at the Art Institute of Chicago, and ultimately settled there.

Ito's mastery is rooted in her ability to achieve subtle tonal gradients and shifts within a highly structured, largely geometric composition. She begins with an undercoat over which she often lays a contrasting color, which is arranged in parallel bands of slightly different hues. The contrasting color sets the key for the other colors and tones she will incorporate into her painting. Also, the contrasting color of the undercoat activates both the parallel bands of tonal hues and fields of carefully modulated color, as well as imbue them with a delicate opticality. The subtle tonal modifications and carefully articulated modulations tilt our attention away from the image, back toward the painting, and the attention Ito has paid to surface and color. The tonal gradations present within a single, clearly defined band are the result of carefully laid down brushstrokes, all going in the same direction, a sustained action that requires an incredible amount of attention.

In moving between looking at an image of what we believe to be a thing and looking at a surface made up distinct, but closely related, shifting hues and clearly defined, modulated areas, we echo the formal tension between the painting's flatness and spatiality. This echo is further complicated by the tension between symmetry and asymmetry. Diagonal bands don't line up across the surface, and visual echoes differ in scale and placement. It's as if a temblor has ever so slightly shifted a deeply personal and private world, and nothing in it can ever be put quite right again. The tacks that encase some of the paintings underscore this feeling that we are looking at the after effects of an unnamed rupture. Evidently, Ito used the carpet tacks to hold her paintings to the stretcher; they could be taken off so that she could go back into the painting. At the same time, the tacks become a minor visual irritant; they buzz on the edges of our sightline as we scrutinize her paintings, which reveal themselves slowly. One also senses that the tacks might have been meant to recall the need to be able to leave quickly with what is most precious, to be able roll it up rather than leave it behind.

Ito's paintings quietly enthrall us with their coloristic and tonal shifts, each of which is used to indicate the existence of a different thing, whatever it might be. Her diagonal bands and angled geometric shapes evoke spaces that are partially hidden from view. A half-open drawer is the nearest thing these spaces call to mind. And the slanting, parallel bands surely remind one of slatted wooden furniture, traditional Japanese cabinets, tabernacles, and tables seen from an odd angle, but whatever image she conjures up almost always dissolves back into being a painting whose allusiveness and partially hidden domains convey a private world. One is reminded of how easily children can imagine a box to be a boat, a dresser to be castle made up of many hidden chambers.

Yau, John. "Miyoko Ito." *The Brooklyn Rail,* May 2006.

To her credit, Ito bumps this secret world right up against something larger. In her juxtapositions of carefully arranged diagonal bands to modulated areas, often in red, blue, or pale green, one senses that the artist was bringing together the domestic and the celestial, the private interior world inhabited by the individual and the empyrean realm which dissolves all traces of one's personality. Thus, she neither fetishizes the private, nor makes it into something precious and frozen.

Miyoko Ito is to Chicago Imagist art what Myron Stout is to New York abstract art, an artist who out of necessity went her own way. The result is not an eccentric stance or style, but something deeper and ultimately more resonant and satisfying. Like Stout, Ito's analytic intelligence is everywhere to be seen, but at no point does it overwhelm the inherent mystery of her sensual yet restrained world. Her highly focused devotion to tonalities and hues shares something with Stout's rigorous calibrations of edges and curves. And finally, in her transformation of things lying around the house, Ito anticipates the animated presences of Elizabeth Murray. It isn't enough to say that Ito's work warrants our attention, which it does. It deserves both a monograph and retrospective as well.

Yau, John. "Miyoko Ito." *The Brooklyn Rail,* May 2006.

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The New York Times

Art in Review; Miyoko Ito

By Ken Johnson
April 14, 2006

Adam Baumgold Gallery 74 East 79th Street, Manhattan Through April 30

Miyoko Ito (1918-1983) inspired a generation of artists who came of age in Chicago in the 1960's and early 1970's, including Jim Nutt, Roger Brown and Elizabeth Murray. This excellent show of her beautiful and luminous paintings from the 60's and 70's -- the latter half of her career -- is the first solo presentation of Ito's work in New York since 1978.

Ito created a unique, semi-abstract blend of Constructivism and Surrealism. Fine straight and curvy lines define flat areas of muted color that are subtly modulated by light, giving the impression of an enigmatic, possibly Japanese architecture with paneled walls punctuated by doors and windows. Some pictures suggest accumulations of furniture in storage.

Up close you see that the surfaces are made of countless small, dry brushstrokes, creating a texture like fine-grained stucco and imparting an all-over visual and tactile vibration. The slightly blurred fine lines defining broader shapes are actually gaps betweens areas of color. These qualities of touch and texture give the gratifying feeling that nothing about the making of the paintings was taken for granted.

Despite the flatness and abstraction, the paintings conjure a de Chirico-like sense of expectancy, as if, were you to wait patiently and with a sufficiently open mind, some miraculous revelation would occur on their implied stages. Yet there is nothing heavily portentous about Ito's paintings; they have a wry, light sense of humor that is perfectly in tune with their sense of mystic possibility and formal elegance. KEN JOHNSON

Johnson, Ken. "Art in Review; Miyoko Ito." *The New York Times,* April 14, 2006, p. E32.

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ARTnews

"New York Reviews"
October 1978
By Peter Frank

Miyoko Ito (Phyllis Kind): Ito is a master of intense but exquisitely modulated color, which she achieves in thick, evenly applied oils that build up a granularity on her canvases. This finesse Ito applies to abstract compositions made up of both straight and curved lines. The lines and colors conspire to keep the shape of things in a permanent state of ambiguity. More than just a feeling of landscape pervades Ito's pictures, but receding perspectives, horizon lines, atmospheric modulation, the red-brown of the earth, the green of vegetation and architectural details, while all decidedly there, do not quite coalesce into *places*. Rather, lines loop about, turn corners or cluster before they get around to describing things; the colors shift the wrong way, into pearlescent hues where intensity is expected, towards dark where light should be. This is an optical magic, forbidding almost surrealistically the emergence of recognizable reality.

Frank, Peter. "New York Reviews." *ARTnews,* October 1978.

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Exhibition

Miyoko Ito

Miyoko Ito, *Untitled #126*, ca. 1970.

> *"I have no place to take myself except painting."*
>
> –Miyoko Ito[1]

Stein, Jordan. "Miyoko Ito." *The Visual Asian American Art Museum.*

Miyoko Ito was born in Berkeley, California, to Japanese parents in 1918. Owing to her family's limited means and a difficult housing market, she relocated to Japan as a young girl with her pregnant mother and younger sister. "Those five years are the roots of what I am right now," she reported later, explaining that they were both "very wonderful" and "terribly traumatic."[2] While she excelled in an arts-filled curriculum at school, her mother gave birth to a stillborn child and Ito became badly ill, for a time losing the ability to walk. Towards the end of her life, the artist experienced a nervous breakdown, and would speak about the early chapter of her childhood in these terms.

Returning to Berkeley, Ito attended high school and majored in art practice at UC Berkeley, where she studied watercolor under John Haley, Erle Loran, and Worth Ryder. Her senior year was interrupted by World War II, when she was sent to Tanforan—a San Bruno horse track turned internment camp—alongside her new husband, Harry Ichiyasu, and thousands of others under Executive Order 9066, signed by Franklin Roosevelt in 1942. Released years before her new husband, Ito briefly matriculated at Smith College before transferring to the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where she received a scholarship but never graduated.

Chicago was a supportive environment for women artists and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago—unique for its female faculty and supporting non-European-centric art history courses—admitted women and artists of color by the end of the late 19th century.[3] Kathleen Blackshear, an artist and art historian who integrated works and cultures then considered "primitive" or otherwise off-canon into her curricula, especially influenced Ito. Cited as "the first woman to wear pants in her small southern hometown" [4] of Novasota, Texas, Blackshear arrived to Chicago in 1924 to study at SAIC and began teaching there just two years later. It was not uncommon for the young professor to

Miyoko Ito, photographer unknown.

Tanforan Japanese American Internment Camp. ca. 1942.

shepherd students to the Field Museum of Natural History, the Oriental Institute, Shedd Aquarium, and even the zoo and planetarium.

Blackshear sought to examine "systems of abstract patterning in the natural world and in manufactured objects,"[5] herself taking a cue from Helen Gardner, the pathbreaking professor of SAIC's first art history course and author of the influential book, *Art though the Ages: An Introduction to Its History and Significance* (1926). Gardner greatly inspired a group of postwar figural painters in the 1940s including Leon Golub, Theodore Halkin, Evelyn Statsinger, and others who came to be known as the Monster Roster. Depictions of strange, hybrid human-animal creatures, inspired critics "to explain that the new generation of Chicagoans made monsters and trafficked in horror and the abject,[6] as curator Bob Cozzolino has written.

Field Museum, Chicago, date and photographer unknown.

Though Ito had distinct aesthetic concerns, she and several Monster Roster artists played a significant role in the creation of Exhibition Momentum (1948–1957), a self-organized group that "posited a way to work around old-guard authority and the dearth of commercial spaces in Chicago," that ultimately proved unsustainable due to "conflicting aims and infighting."[7] Momentum organized exhibitions at six different venues and solicited high profile national jurors, including Betty Parsons and Clement Greenberg.[8]

In the early days of Momentum, Ito abandoned the watercolor practice informed by the patterns and textures of

Synthetic Cubism that had defined her education. Instead, the artist employed various printmaking methods, including lithography, a medium she first explored as a resident at Oxbow Art Colony, a summer art school in Michigan affiliated with SAIC, and oil on canvas. On several occasions, the artist rendered precisely the same quasi-representational content across multiple media. Beginning at this time, Ito's work was included in large—and largely anonymous—annual juried exhibitions around the country, including repeat appearances at the Art Institute of Chicago, the San Francisco Museum of Art (later the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art), and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

Miyoko Ito, *Mistress of the Sewing Machine*, oil on canvas, 1949.

Her first daughter, Elissa, was born in 1949, the same year as her first solo exhibition at the Palmer House Galleries in Chicago. Her son, Alan, was born the following year. "I was pretty much obscure in the '50s," the artist notes, "raising two children and also staying pretty much to myself, too."[9] She did, however, maintain friendships with artists Vera Berdich, Walter Boyer, Whitney Halstead, Tom Kapsalis, and Evelyn Statsinger. The representational content of her work, such as figures and domestic objects, was traded for a geometrically rigid, collage-like formalism in brackish shades of green, blue, orange, and yellow. Further, she developed an underpainting technique that remained critical for the remainder of her practice in which improvisatory drawings in red, green, and charcoal formed the foundations of emergent paintings, the lines serving as shadowy gaps between color forms.

Toward the end of the decade, she altered her formal approach once again as sharp corners grew rounded and compositions turned bodily and tubular. Her style, defined by some as "abstract impressionism,"[10] was informed by the surfaces of Pierre Bonnard and the influence of Surrealism.[11] In an effort to share her effortd with an immediate community, Ito founded Superior Street Gallery (1959–1961) with artist Ellen Lanyon and others, an important but short-lived exhibition space in part supported by Joseph R. Shapiro, who soon became the first president of Museum of Contemporary Art.

Miyoko Ito, *Mistress of the Sewing Machine*, lithograph, 1949.

Kalamazoo, from 1959, is emblematic of her early, self-assured experiments with oil on canvas. The work depicts a menagerie of wide-eyed figures in a thick, earthy application of mid-century browns, blues, and yellows. Its title, which references a town just over the Michigan border from Illinois, may have sounded otherworldly to a Midwestern transplant seeking inspiration. A sense of buoyancy and depth foreshadows the floating network of wiggles, threads, dots, portals, and tufts that would populate her efforts for decades.

Slightly later works like *Step by Step* (1962) introduced not only a brighter palate, but seductive color gradient backgrounds, a hugely significant innovation conjuring a sense of depth. Forms no longer play on the surface of the canvas, but instead come alive against the recession of space and passage of time. Titles like Step by Step simultaneously reflect the pedestrian and psychological.

From the early 1970s, self-organized modes of presentation and message-in-a-bottle submissions gave way to more nuanced participation at a number of nimble and exciting Chicago institutions, including a solo exhibition at the Hyde Park Art Center in 1971, and the 1972 landmark exhibition Chicago Imagist Art at the Museum of Contemporary Art. The term "Imagist" itself is confused and complex, and her participation in the latter show has more to do with her inclusion in critic and artist Franz Schulze's book Fantastic Images: Chicago Art Since 1945, published the same year, than any connection to what came to be known as Chicago Imagist artwork later in the decade. While the word has become a kind of shorthand for much experimental work coming from Chicago, there was a disconnect between the artwork emanating from SAIC from 1945 to the mid-1960s and the rise of the next generation of Chicago artists. In the context of representation and given the rise of abstract expressionism, her friend, the artist Vera Klement, notes that at this time Chicago was "polarized between imagism and abstraction. But Miyoko had taken her place on a higher ledge, a precarious point of balance between the two."[12]

Pierre Bonnard, *The Studio with Mimosas*, 1939–1946.

Stein, Jordan. "Miyoko Ito." *The Visual Asian American Art Museum.*

Miyoko Ito, *Step by Step*, oil on canvas, 1962.

Ito was an early charge of legendary dealer Phyllis Kind, who afforded the artist a solo exhibition at her Chicago gallery in 1973. Later that decade, Ito had significant exposure in New York, including an appearance in the 1975 Whitney Biennial followed that same year by a solo exhibition at the esteemed Kornblee Gallery, which also presented the work of Dan Flavin, Malcolm Morley, and Betty Parsons. Kind, who herself opened a New York Gallery shortly thereafter, presented a solo exhibition of Ito's work in 1978. Her practice developed from Hyde Park, where she had a home studio, and during nearly a dozen fellowships at McDowell Colony beginning in 1970 and further trips to Oxbow, settings that allowed for quiet, focus, and camaraderie.

Kind came to represent many of the now internationally recognized next-generation-Imagists, including Roger Brown, Gladys Nilsson, Jim Nutt, and Barbara Rossi, among others. Nutt recalls that Kind's embrace of Ito—already a mature artist—motivated him and wife Nilsson to sign up on her growing artist roster, one that became critical to Chicago's art history.[13]

Though a generation older than the stars of a movement known for its offbeat, comic-book iconography, Ito shared their zeal for the subliminal juxtaposition, logic-defying representation and technical precision of Surrealism. Ito and the younger artists successfully fused Pop Art's feverish

Phyllis Kind Gallery Holiday Card, 1977

Stein, Jordan. "Miyoko Ito." *The Visual Asian American Art Museum.*

Helen Frankenthaler, *Small's Paradise*, 1964.

palette with an eccentric, outsider air. A sense of discovery was prized. "When I approach a canvas, I try to as much as possible keep my mind blank," Ito remarked.[14]

That said, Ito was an outsider in age, disposition, and background from this group, and her union of physical and metaphysical worlds would have been too precious for many of the urbane up-and-comers. Titles like Oracle, Shrine, Dusk, Narcissa, and Steps signal an interest in time, ritual, repetition, and myth. Ito's efforts are more aligned with the materially rich and visionary work of painters such as Forrest Bess and Helen Frankenthaler, her contemporaries, or Arthur Dove and Giorgio Morandi, a generation older.

The artist hit an astonishingly unique stride from the 1970s until the end of her life with searching explorations of self-portraiture and place. At once first person and topographic in their construction, many works from this period overlay a mountainous, bust-like figure against a distant horizon of saturated color. While references to landscape painting and architecture are overt, Ito's highly structured, never-quite-symmetrical compositions constitute a profound mapping of the psyche, oscillating between confinement and expanse. In a palette that warms over time, vertical stacks of tubes, bars, and mounds are rendered in delicate fades of color and subtle modulations in tone. A picture emerges of an artist endeavoring to position herself in relation to hazy and remote surroundings. "I have no place to take myself except painting," Ito revealed in a 1978 interview.[15]

The compartmentalized spaces of her most fertile period are organic and exact, like dreams recalled in unusual detail. Works like *Interior Presence*, 1971; and *Heart of Hearts, Basking*, 1973, portray furniture-like elements slipping into abstraction, while simultaneously suggesting a mind becoming a closet or drawer—that is, an apparatus for the arrangement of things, sometimes shared but often closed or concealed. Not explicitly political, the tension between domestic and subjective interiority, the act of self-portraiture, and her collage-like practice are nonetheless in tune with the second-wave feminism of the time.

The title of *Todoroki*, 1974, is a Japanese surname common to the Nagano Prefecture, where it exists as a location. It is also a remote waterfall in the Okinawa Prefecture, and, neatly, in English translates to "rumble" or "resound." The painting emphasizes the overlapping of name, place, and sound, and is indicative of Ito's unfixed and synesthetic approach. Thick, horizontal lines support the picture as stretcher bars support a frame.

Heart of Hearts, Artists Space, Installation View.

Later works like *Center Stage*, 1980, and *Iliad*, 1981, grow increasingly abstract and celestial, the drama at their core not just hollow, but indeterminate. A more profound sense of space is signaled, as if the theater itself, unsure of its role without actors, begins to come undone. Ever warmer, they are rendered in mauve, pine, summer orange, and countless shades of blue. *Narcissa* (1982) and *Byzantium* (1983) describe rigorous self-examination while hinting, for the first time in many years, at a combination of bodies. Layers stack vertically in mounds, slides, and bars, like video games of hallucinatory origin.

Numerous canvases are affixed to their stretcher bars with half-driven tacks, apparently the result of Ito's wish to remove and continue working on various paintings over time. The raised tacks remain, however, even in many "finished" works—as if a halo beyond the canvas edge. As critic John Yau notes, they "recall the need to be able to leave quickly with what is most precious, to be able to roll it up rather than leave it behind."[16] They speak to a violent and vulnerable admission of the mere thingness of painting, and in turn, life.

Although her efforts were highly susceptible to regionalization, Ito was honored with a retrospective exhibition at the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago in 1980. She died from cancer in 1983. While commercial galleries like Adam Baumgold Gallery, New York, and VeneKlasen/Werner, Berlin, mounted solo presentations of her work in the last 20 years, *Miyoko Ito / MATRIX 267*,

an exhibition at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive in 2017, marked the first solo presentation of Ito's work in her hometown and the first in a public institution in nearly forty years. Not a decisive survey, *MATRIX 267* primarily brought together a group works painted in the last dozen years of the artist's life.

Although it is difficult to explicitly track Ito's relationship with her native Berkeley through her work, traces of her hometown appear in *Untitled 126* (1970). The relatively subdued canvas foregrounds a dome-headed object surveying a strikingly familiar landscape, as if Ito were watching the sun slowly set beyond the hills and blue-green water of her childhood. Her singular vision, in this work and in her practice more broadly, reminds us not only of our inseparability from the natural world, but that human interiors are just as vast and unknowable as any vista.

Heart of Hearts, a version of the *MATRIX* exhibition, was mounted the following year at Artists Space, an important not-for-profit institution in downtown Manhattan. The show brought many reviews and accolades to the artist's under-known practice. Though her star may continue to rise after her death, one wishes the artist might have celebrated her uncommon achievement with a wider public during her lifetime.

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