

PUSH, VIBRATE, SCRAPE, CRASH, MOVE

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PRESS RELEASE

The exhibition title derives its name from five verbs extracted from a line of text featured in one of Arakawa's paintings. The verbs directly allude to transformative processes experienced by an artist during the act of creation itself, exploring the notion of converting shape into color – a moment when observation becomes an interactive and cathartic endeavor. Five verbs for five artists.

The history of contemporary art in Japan is both intricate and enduring, tracing its origins back to the aftermath of World War II, including the devastating bombing of Hiroshima and the subsequent US military occupation. Upon closer observation, through a Western lens, it is often surprising to find that the art that emerged from this post-war period was not solely concerned with destruction, but also encapsulated rebellion, self-determination and transformation.

Push, vibrate, scrape, crash, move seeks to imbue this significant era with an additional layer of color, focusing on artworks from the 60s, 70s and 80s. Several of the featured artists emerged from radical and innovative artistic collectives in Japan, such as Mono-ha or Gutai. Yet each of the five presented embody a unique exploration, giving careful attention to the formal properties of color, as well as line and space, through often unfamiliar, original techniques.

By broadening our horizons within Japan and extending geographically into a Western context, this exhibition provides an unprecedented opportunity to observe the five artists from a different perspective and historical timeframe. The artworks shown not only reflect movements that emerged from unique national conditions, but also demonstrate the influence of international cross-cultural exchanges of ideas. While Yamada remained in Japan, Matsutani temporarily settled in Paris and Kuwayama permanently moved to New York. Nevertheless, each artist remained connected to their cultural roots and committed to artistic traditions as well as embodying a receptiveness to the transformative nature of creative possibilities. Their collective presentation aims to add new colorful perspectives and interpretations to the historical narrative of the post-war period while extending our own sensibilities and imaginations across the broader spectrum that spans from East to West.

Shusaku ARAKAWA (b. 1936 - 2010): Arakawa's artistic exploration revolves around the concept of perception and the relationship between the viewer and the artwork. Characteristic of an especial creative period before he became an architect, through his thought-provoking, schematic and strongly reduced painting, he challenged conventional notions of space, time, philosophical ideas considering art's intrinsic functions, the language of signs, symbols, and visual meanings. Arakawa lived and worked in Europe and the US.

Tadaaki KUWAYAMA (b. 1932): Kuwayama is renowned for his minimalist artworks that embody simplicity, precision and a meticulous attention to detail. Exploring three-dimensionality through the 60s, he incorporated industrial materials into his work and using hardware-store materials in commercially available colors. He produced works as a means of addressing minimalist interest in perceptual and spatial dimension while retaining a two-dimensionality of painting. His monochromatic brightly colored fields and geometric forms evoke a sense of harmony and contemplation, allowing for an engagement in the interplay between light, shadow and form. Kuwayama lives and works in New York.

Takesada MATSUTANI (b. 1937): Matsutani was a key member of the 'second generation' of the influential art collective Gutai. His practice revolves around the innovative implementation of materials and techniques – his iconic use of vinyl glue and graphite creates dynamic textures and rhythmic patterns that convey a sense of movement and energy. His artworks often blur the boundary between painting and sculpture, interplaying materiality and form. He lives and works between Japan and France.

Nobuo SEKINE (b. 1942 - 2019): Sekine is widely regarded as one of the pioneers of the Mono-ha movement, which emerged in Japan in the late 1960s. His sculptures and installations embody the essence of natural organic materials, such as stone, steel and wood, emphasizing the relationship between object and space. His works evoke a contemplative experience that encourages one to reflect on the harmony between humanity and the natural world.

Masaaki YAMADA (b. 1929 - 2010): Yamada's art is deeply rooted in traditional Japanese aesthetics, incorporating elements of calligraphy and Zen philosophy. Through his delicate inks and oil paintings, he captures the essence of nature and transient beauty. His paintings and drawing evoke a sense of tranquility and invite one into an immersive, meditative state.