

Malcolm Mooney
WORKS: 1970–1986
May 26–July 2, 2022

WORKS: 1970–1986 is Malcolm Mooney’s first solo exhibition in New York in eleven years.

Mooney produced his first geometric works in 1970 as set designs for a theater play titled “Harlem Angel,” which was never actually staged. The motif, however, would prove highly productive for Mooney. Shortly after he began work on a series of eponymous silk screens at his father’s print shop in Yonkers, New York. He describes the origin of these pieces as developed from an image of kente cloth viewed under a microscope.

This image continued to inform his paintings and drawings of grids throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Mooney’s interest evolved further through his encounter with the 1972 exhibition “African Textiles and Decorative Arts” at the Museum of Modern Art, his friendship with textile curator and shopkeeper Sara Penn as well as his own work in the mechanical processes of textile design.

From experiments with utilitarian objects to stage and lighting design, from graphic design to work with textiles, clothing, and even runway shows, there persists an ongoing migration between the applied and “high art” in Mooney’s work which intentionally cross-pollinates both.

The metaphoric potential of darkness and shadow is another theme which appears throughout Mooney’s work, as is the case in *The Abyss, Space in the Night*, from 1974. Originally one of Mooney’s early grid works, it has been almost entirely painted over, cloaking the image in a diaphanous black cloud.

In the same years that minimalists and conceptualists were developing an approach to the grid as an airless, puritanical matrix, Mooney’s grids were building from an investment in color and tactility, as well as design and craft tradition.

Malcolm Mooney (b. 1944 in Yonkers) is an artist, poet, singer and lyricist. He is currently based in Calgary, Canada. He received an MFA from California State University, and a BFA from Boston University’s School of Fine Arts and Applied Arts. Mooney has exhibited his work over the past five decades. Solo and group exhibitions of his work include *Winterfest*, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen (2021), curated by Saim Demircan, as well as *White Room*, White Columns, New York (2011), organized by Matthew Higgs. Mooney is currently an instructor of painting at Alberta University of the Arts.