



Taka Ishii  
Gallery

Maebashi

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## **Tadaaki Kuwayama**

**Dates: May 11 – Jun 16, 2024**

**Location: Taka Ishii Gallery Maebashi**

Taka Ishii Gallery Maebashi is pleased to present a solo exhibition of New York-based artist Tadaaki Kuwayama, who passed away in August 2023. The exhibition marks his second solo show at Taka Ishii Gallery, and will feature works that represent Kuwayama, who broke new ground in abstract expression, incorporating a painterly style.

Kuwayama has consistently produced reductivist works since moving to New York in 1958. Widely recognized as one of the pioneers of American Minimalism of the 1960s and 1970s, he had a solo exhibition at the Green Gallery in 1961. His status as a globally acclaimed Minimalist, however, is premised on the categorization of his art into styles such as “color field painting” and “monochrome painting” in relation to preexisting evaluation criteria. By exploring the material of his works with a spirit of experimentation, Kuwayama pursued unprecedented beauty.

The works shown in this exhibition focus on the 1960s, when acrylic paint was used, and the 1970s, when metallic paint was used, allowing us to see how Kuwayama’s paintings evolved over time.

In the series of works first made in 1966, the colors are applied smoothly with acrylic paint on canvas in which aluminum strips are inserted. In the early days of his career, Kuwayama used Japanese pigments (iwa-enogu) dissolved in acrylic solvents and applied repeatedly with a flat brush to Japanese paper lined with canvas to create a flat colored surface. In 1963, by changing the paint to acrylic and using varnish for finishing, the surface of his works became smooth and glossy. The colors are equally saturated and bright, reflecting the American preference for artificial colors in everyday life at the time. In addition, the metal strips that he began incorporating during this period give the work a sense of presence as sharp and taut material lines that are qualitatively different from the lines drawn by hand. The rectangular and square panels were standardized as if they were part of a modern mechanical production system and with the principle of symmetry: such as 1:1, 1:2 and 1:3, until the end of the 1960s.

The works from the 1970s, while retaining the element of rectangular aluminum strips, were coated with metallic paint on canvases that were shaped as circular, semi-circular, or panels of different lengths by the combination of rectangles. The metallic gray is the main color tone, which changes to a combination of light colors such as pink, yellow, brown, and beige, and the use of air spray completely removes all traces of handwork. Although Kuwayama wrote down the date of production, the name of the artist, and the name of the color scheme as his notes, they are always “untitled,” indicating that the artist himself treats his works like

standardized industrial products.

Tadaaki Kuwayama was born 1932 in Nagoya and passed away in 2023. After graduating from the Japanese Painting course at the Tokyo University of the Arts in 1958, he moved and was based in New York, the United States. Early on, he produced works using Japanese mineral pigments and paper. After his solo exhibition at Green Gallery in 1961, he began making monochromatic acrylic paintings that were combined to make geometric forms and pioneered the American Minimalist movement in the 1960s and 1970s. His globally acclaimed works, which are intended to be pure art and provide pure art experiences, display no subjective expression. His solo exhibitions include Mies van der Rohe Haus, Berlin (2021); The Museum of Modern Art, Hayama (2012); The National Museum of Art, Osaka (2011); the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa (2011); the Nagoya City Art Museum (2010); the Rupertinum Museum, Salzburg (2000); the Kawamura Memorial Museum of Art, Sakura and the Chiba City Museum of Art (both 1996); the Kitakyushu Municipal Museum of Art, Fukuoka (1985). His works have also been included in numerous group exhibitions including "Surface, Support, Process: The 1960s Monochrome in the Guggenheim Collection," the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2011); "The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860-1989," the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2009); "Japanese Art After 1945: Scream Against the Sky," the San Francisco Museum of Art (1995); "Vormen van de Kleur," the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (1966-67); "Systemic Painting," the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (1966). His works are also included in the collections of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; the Nationalgalerie, Berlin; the Foundation for Constructivist, Concrete and Conceptual Art, Zurich; The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo; The National Museum of Art, Osaka and others.

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Wed – Sun 11:00 – 19:00 Closed on Mon, Tue and National Holidays



Tadaaki Kuwayama

“Untitled”, 1972

Acrylic on canvas

222.8 cm diameter

© Tadaaki Kuwayama

Photo: Kenji Takahashi



Tadaaki Kuwayama

“Untitled”, 1966

Acrylic on canvas

60.9 x 60.9 cm

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