An abstract expressionist painting featuring a complex composition of colors and textures. The palette includes earthy tones like ochre, sienna, and terracotta, alongside cooler hues of teal, turquoise, and pale green. Dark, charcoal-like areas are interspersed throughout, particularly on the right side. The brushwork is highly visible, with thick, expressive strokes and areas of blending, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall effect is one of raw, emotional energy.

**ABSTRACT
EXPRESSIONISM**
LOOKING EAST FROM THE FAR WEST

An abstract expressionist painting featuring a complex composition of thick, textured brushstrokes. The color palette is diverse, including deep blacks, bright yellows, vibrant reds, and bold blues. The overall effect is one of dynamic energy and expressive spontaneity.

**Theresa
Papanikolas**

with
Stephen Salel

Honolulu
Museum of Art

ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM

**LOOKING
EAST
FROM
THE FAR
WEST**

This catalogue is published in conjunction with the exhibition *Abstract Expressionism: Looking East from the Far West*, organized by the Honolulu Museum of Art. The exhibition was held at the Honolulu Museum of Art from September 7, 2017, to January 21, 2018.

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NOTE TO THE READER:
Asian names are given in the traditional Asian manner with family name first, followed by the given name or “artist name.” Western artists, including Asian American artists, are presented in the Western manner, with the family name following the given name.

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Foreword and Acknowledgments

Abstract Expressionism: Looking East from the Far West takes a fresh look at mid-twentieth-century abstraction through a reconsideration of its Asian and Asian American practitioners, with special focus on artists active in the Hawaiian Islands. The exhibition brings artists of the New York School together with painters and sculptors from Japan, Hawai'i and the American West Coast, exhibiting them in tandem to reveal powerful continuities between those situated safely within the canon and those on its critical margins. It also examines the ways in which Eastern traditions, from Chinese and Japanese calligraphy to Zen Buddhism, helped advance Abstract Expressionism's aesthetic agenda—its understated lyricism, its compositional balance, its subtle awareness of place—regardless of the artist. Within this framework, Hawai'i's Abstract Expressionists take their place alongside exponents of the

movement nationally, building on the museum's record of actively transforming our understanding of the art of Hawai'i through exhibitions and public programs that situate it within its broader context.

The Honolulu Museum of Art organized this exhibition and catalogue under the leadership of Dr. Theresa Papanikolas, the museum's deputy director of art and programs, but a project of this magnitude and scope requires significant resources and the participation of many dedicated people. She and I would like to thank, on behalf of the museum, our Board of Trustees, as well as the following foundations, corporations, and individuals for their valued support: the Terra Foundation for American Art; the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities; First Insurance Company of Hawaii; Alston Hunt Floyd & Ing; JCB International Credit Card Co., Ltd.; Tori Richard, Ltd.; Halekulani;

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At the Honolulu Museum of Art, Dr. Papanikolas and I are pleased to thank our fabulous

colleagues. In the department of European and American art, Administrative Assistant Danee McFarr helped request loans for the exhibition and undertook the enormous task of securing images for the catalogue. Director of Collections Cynthia Low handled the intricate task of arranging the loans of artwork and their transport to the museum. Collections Manager Brady Evans coordinated the photography of artwork from our permanent collection, while Photographer Shuzo Uemoto completed the bulk of the photography for this volume. In this they were supported by Ms. Low, Collections Assistant Jen Callejo, Art Director Jared Stone, and Lead Preparator Marc Thomas. Installation Designer Larry Maruya lent his magic to the exhibition's design and, along with his crew—Paul Caleb, Spenson Donre, Jesse Jim, Dararu Nakane, Robert Owens, Jeremy Pang, and Mr. Thomas—ensured that the process of installing the show went off without a hitch. Director of Communications Lesa Griffith, along with Senior Graphic Designer Anjali Lee, oversaw the design and production of all printed matter associated with this exhibition, while Mr. Stone directed his talents to the design of the catalogue; Ms. Griffith also handled press queries and developed the exhibition's marketing plan. Head Librarian Sachiyo Kawai'ae'a and Archivist Dawn Sueoka helped locate essential research materials, while Asian Art Department Manager and Editor Sati Benes Chock and Intern

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This exhibition supports the museum's mission to educate our public through creative connections with art, and its catalogue serves as its permanent record. In offering a new understanding of the contribution of Asian and Asian American artists to Abstract Expressionism, we are certain this undertaking will make an important contribution to the field.

SEAN O'HARROW, PH.D.
Director





ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM: LOOKING EAST FROM THE FAR WEST

Theresa Papanikolas

IN THE EARLY 1950s, the Japanese artist Saburo Hasegawa entered into correspondence with the Abstract Expressionist painter Franz Kline. Hasegawa was associated with *Bokujinkai* (Society of People of Ink), an avant-garde group of calligraphy masters who wished to release that ancient practice from proscribed signification by opening it up to Western abstraction. He was drawn to Kline's monumental canvases for their gestural strokes of black, which, forcefully intersecting against broad swaths of white "resolutely and determinedly fathomed the world of calligraphy" (plate 21)¹. Hasegawa published Kline's paintings in *Bokujinkai's* visual and literary journal, *Bokubi*, and Kline—who wrote to Hasegawa about his "love for Korin,

Hokusai and the older painters of Japan and China" (Tamaki)—gave copies to his fellow New York artists.² The affinities between Kline's work and Japanese calligraphy caught the attention of the critic Thomas Hess, who remarked that the artist's "[mastery of] a heavy calligraphy lends [his painting] . . . a certain Oriental deftness," and noted that "in fact, sculptor Isamu Noguchi reports that work along similar lines is being attempted in Japan today."³ Noguchi, for his part, had introduced Hasegawa to Kline's painting, and spent his own career creating sculpture and designs that negotiated continuities between Asian art and Western abstraction. He was, moreover, one of many Asian and Asian American artists—including the

Japanese nationals Hasegawa and Kenzo Okada, and the Hawai'i-born artists Isami Doi, Satoru Abe, and Tadashi Sato—who moved in Abstract Expressionist circles in New York during the mid-twentieth-century. These artists expanded the discourse of abstraction to incorporate cultural memory and notions of place; yet, their contributions to the movement, together with Kline's exchange with Hasegawa, his interest in calligraphy, and indeed any perceptible link between Abstract Expressionism, Asian art, and Asian thought, became sidelined when the critic Clement Greenberg described "Kline's apparent allusions to Chinese or Japanese calligraphy" as an ill-informed comparison that:

encouraged the cant . . . about a general Oriental influence on "abstract expressionism." This country's possession of a Pacific coast offered a handy received idea with which to explain the otherwise puzzling fact that Americans were at last producing a kind of art important enough to be influencing the French, not to mention the Italians, the British, and the Germans. Actually, not one of the original "abstract expressionists"—least of all Kline—has felt more than a cursory interest in Oriental art. The sources of their art lie entirely in the West.⁴

Greenberg's allusion to a remote East (Asia), a more relevant West (Europe), and

Abstract Expressionism's (America's) ultimate independence from both reflects the formalist—and nationalist—lens through which he promoted the movement on the pages of *Partisan Review*, *The Nation*, and *Commentary* during the 1940s and 1950s. Greenberg emphasized the autonomy and nonreferentiality of the object, the subordination of subject matter to medium, and the inherent quality of the artwork as the locus of meaning and value.⁵ His views found their complement in the writings of Harold Rosenberg, whose theory of action established the canvas as the performative site of the artist's individualism and direct expression, "a 'moment' in the adulterated mixture of [the artist's] life."⁶ Both critics championed the autonomy of the object and the individualism of the artist. To them, art's significance lay in its physical presence and the means by which it was created; art-historical precedents, literary references, illusionism, humanism, and especially cultural markers had nothing to add to understanding of the work. Their theories, though focused on only a handful of artists, powerfully articulated a specific set of narratives that have come to dominate and shape the story of Abstract Expressionism: that it was the first movement in the history of American art to achieve international renown; that it developed exclusively in New York during and after World War II under the influence of Surrealist automatism, the formal structure of Cubism,

and the notable presence in the United States of European Modernists in exile; that it broke free from these early influences by the mid-1940s; that it flourished (again in New York) as a definitively American alliance of ruggedly independent, self-styled artist-heroes; and that these artist-heroes—among them Jackson Pollock, Robert Motherwell, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, Willem de Kooning, and Kline—developed signature painterly styles characterized by extreme individualism, existentialist spontaneity, the absence of external referents, and the cultivation of universal resonance.

This model, however, does not take into account the large number and diversity of artists who also practiced abstraction and moved in avant-garde circles during the mid-twentieth-century, but who operated on the critical margins of Abstract Expressionism. Among them were Norman Lewis, Hale Woodruff, Lee Krasner, Shirley Goldfarb, and Hedda Sterne, whose work, stylistically in keeping with the formal parameters of gestural abstraction, was routinely misrepresented on the basis of race and gender. Perle Fine and Charmion von Wiegand were similarly overlooked because they resisted signature styles and even dabbled in figuration, and Mark Tobey and Morris Graves, whose careers unfolded far from Abstract Expressionism's New York epicenter, were relegated to second-tier status. Indeed, until very recently, the received history of Abstract

Expressionism either unintentionally left out or deliberately passed over the artists of color, women, regional artists, most sculptors, and all practitioners of craft who, along with the diverse philosophies and paradigms that inspired them, either developed or contributed to significant modes of abstraction that go beyond the New York School's perceived Eurocentric nationalism.⁷ Most significantly, the numerous Asian and Asian American Abstract Expressionists—who exhibited alongside their better-known counterparts; sought the representation of influential dealers such as Betty Parsons, Edith Halpert, and Peggy Guggenheim; and participated actively in the general intellectual exchange around the new abstraction—have largely been forgotten in the mainstream history of the New York School.⁸ These artists added their voices and experiences to the conversation around Abstract Expressionism, yet, as individuals of “Eastern” descent practicing “Western” forms of abstraction, they could never quite operate independently of race. Instead, they were forced to navigate essentialist expectations that their work be inherently “Asian,” or, ironically, face criticism for looking to their ancestral cultures in developing their personal languages of Modernism.⁹

Isamu Noguchi reflects this cultural duality. Born in Los Angeles to an American mother and a Japanese father, he spent his childhood in Tokyo before being sent back to the United

States to finish high school in Indiana, attend medical school at Columbia University, and ultimately study sculpture at the Leonardo da Vinci Art School in New York. A stint in Paris as a studio assistant to Constantin Brancusi in 1927 taught him the subtle complexity of pure abstraction and the integrity of direct carving; a trip to Japan in 1930 exposed him to the deceptive simplicity of the Zen garden. Back in New York in the 1940s, he developed and maintained his practice as a sculptor and designer, and he forged ties with the nascent New York School through his friendships with de Kooning and Arshile Gorky. These continuities and influences—truth to materials, Western abstraction, and Eastern introspection—guided him to conceive of sculpture as part of a larger whole and explore its potential to engage with and shape its surroundings; yet, despite the expansiveness of his vision and his significant influence on modern public spaces, Noguchi—considered too Japanese by western standards—built his career largely outside the critical mainstream of mid-twentieth-century abstraction.¹⁰

This was also the fate of the painters Kenzo Okada and Saburo Hasegawa, both of whom were born in Japan, but trained as artists in the Western tradition. Okada, who relocated to New York during the postwar years to pursue his artistic career, exhibited regularly at Betty Parsons Gallery beginning in 1953, and, through Parsons, gained access to the inner circle of Abstract Expressionism.

In this milieu, he developed his heavily layered, tonal abstractions (plate 30); yet his work, despite its Western impetus, was routinely conflated with his heritage and relentlessly termed “Japanese.” Hasegawa wrote extensively on European Modernism, and he introduced Japanese artists to Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism. His lectures and teachings on Japanese art and philosophy in New York—which he visited in 1954 as a representative of the Japan Artists Club—solidified his status as a transnational impresario. In his paintings, Hasegawa merged the gesturalism of Japanese calligraphy (of which he was a master) with the spontaneity of Western abstraction, creating black-and-white compositions that demonstrated the Japanese discipline's expressionistic potential for Abstract Expressionism (plate 14). Though his lectures and teachings exposed artists such as de Kooning, Pollock, Rothko, Ad Reinhardt, and Adolph Gottlieb to Asian art and philosophy, his presence and influence in the New York School has gone largely unrecognized in mainstream histories of Abstract Expressionism, a casualty of the hegemony of Greenberg's formalist nationalism.¹¹

Noguchi, Okada, and Hasegawa were joined in New York by a group of Japanese American artists from Hawai'i, who, like them, developed languages of abstraction that both reflected their contact with the New York School and negotiated the cultural legacy of their ancestry. All had traveled to New York



in search of opportunity, for Hawai'i, with few galleries, even fewer art schools, and only a single art museum—the Honolulu Academy of Arts—lacked the infrastructure for a thriving arts community.¹² The most senior member of the group was the painter Isami Doi, who had studied at Columbia University, fallen under the spell of Surrealism in Paris during the 1930s, and, beginning in the 1940s, divided his time between his permanent home on Kaua'i and his studio in New York, settling there in 1954 for an extended stay. Immersing himself in the city's art circles and exhibiting regularly at the Downtown Gallery, Doi discovered in the “many isms and techniques” he encountered the need in his own work to “learn, unlearn, and reconstruct ideals and dreams.”¹³ A practitioner of Zen, he knew how “beset” one could become by the “torrential flow of the materialistic world,” and he observed that Western artists were limited by their “inexorable hunger for fame and showmanship.”¹⁴ In response—and after deep introspection—he reconfigured his approach to painting, elaborating a singular mode of abstraction whose refined palette and gently stippled surfaces reflect his effort to transcend the egoism he perceived in gestural abstraction and align his work with the “subtleness, nuances, innuendos, [and] fragrances” he associated with Zen (plate 8).¹⁵

Doi was a close friend and mentor to the sculptor Satoru Abe and the painter Tadashi Sato, who, like him, went to New York to

practice art and participate in the city's avant-garde circles. From 1948 to 1959, Abe traveled to New York regularly, securing space at the Sculpture Center—the gallery and studio founded by the artist Dorothea Denslow and devoted to sculpture—to show and practice his work, and exhibiting at the Guggenheim and other area museums. In New York, Abe perfected his approach to welding—a technique he had taught himself on his native O'ahu—creating a vocabulary of forms that, simultaneously totemic, organic, evocatively titled, and seemingly in flux, echo the Abstract Expressionist interest in locating equivalents for universal ideas and evoke the cosmic cycles articulated and explored in Asian philosophy (plate 1).

Sato was the grandson of a *sumi-e* painter and in his youth spent thirteen years studying Japanese calligraphy and literature. During World War II he served in the 442nd Infantry Regiment as a language specialist, and when the war was over he entered art school at the Honolulu Academy of Arts on the G.I. Bill. There, he took a summer class with the Precisionist painter Ralston Crawford, who was in residence in Honolulu as a visiting artist. When Crawford returned to New York, Sato followed, continuing his studies at the Brooklyn Museum School and, with Stuart Davis, at the Pratt Institute. The influence of both painters is evident in the flat forms and Cubist space of Sato's early abstractions (plate 37), and his contact with them—together



LEFT Portrait of a group of American abstract artists, collectively known as 'The Irascibles,' New York, New York, November 24, 1950. Pictured are William Baziotes (1912–1963), James C. Brooks (1906–1992), Jimmy Ernst (1920–1984), Adolph Gottlieb (1903–1974), Hedda Sterne (1910–2011), Clyfford Still (1904–1980), Willem de Kooning (1904–1997), Bradley Walker Tomlin (1899–1955), Barnett Newman (1905–1970), Jackson Pollock (1912–1956), Theodoros Stamos (1922–1997), Richard Pousette-Dart (1916–1992), Robert Motherwell (1915–1991), Ad Reinhardt (1913–1967), and Mark Rothko (1903–1970). The name referred to the group's protest letter to Francis Henry Taylor, president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, over the group exhibition selection juries. (Photo by Nina Leen/The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images)



RIGHT The Metcalf Chateau group at the Honolulu Museum of Art in 1954. Pictured from left: Tetsuo "Bob" Ochikubo, Tadashi Sato, Satoru Abe, Edmund Chung (not featured in the exhibition), Jerry Okimoto, and Bumpei Akaji.

with time as a security guard at the Museum of Modern Art—positioned him well within the emerging Abstract Expressionist movement, helped him secure representation at Willard Gallery, and connected him with collectors including the actors Burgess Meredith and Charles Laughton. Sato's immersion in the New York scene merged with his early training in Japanese calligraphy in the delicate brushwork, subtle tonalities, and polished symbolism of his mature style, in which forms float and oscillate in understated evocation of water, sky, and the processes of nature (plates 38 and 39).¹⁶

While it is tempting to conclude that all of these artists responded to, drew upon, and digested Asian art and philosophy exclusively as a result of their shared status as Japanese Americans, doing so ultimately isolates them from the broader context within which they operated and, more specifically, overlooks the widespread interest in Asian art and philosophy within the artistic and intellectual circles of which they were a part. Indeed, the years immediately following World War II ushered in a craze in the United States for Japanese thought and especially Zen Buddhism, which, founded on agency and the promise of individual wholeness, was rich with suggestion for the mid-twentieth-century avant-garde. Zen entered the American popular imagination with the 1948 publication of German philosopher Eugen Herrigel's *Zen in the Art of Archery*,

which offered a roadmap for applying Zen's basic principles to secular pursuits (such as archery), and Richard Wilhelm's 1950 English translation of the *I Ching*, which, with a foreword by Carl Jung, described a world in constant flux and governed by chance.¹⁷ The most influential practitioner of Zen in the United States, however, was Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki, a scholar of Buddhism who lectured and taught at Columbia University in 1950 and 1957, and whose writings had been translated into English by the comparative theologian Paul Carus. Suzuki specialized in making the highly complex and ritualized Zen philosophy accessible to an American audience by separating its religious metaphysics from its essential message of self-discovery and spiritual enlightenment, and by demonstrating its applications for the whole of human experience. Influenced by Western esotericism (he even, at one point, joined the Theosophical Society), Suzuki drew attention to Zen's focus on pure experience as the key to understanding immediate reality, and he pointed out how its emphasis on process, synthesis, and intuition offered balance to the Western dependence on analysis, objectivity, egoism, and science.¹⁸

Suzuki's ideas entered the Abstract Expressionist orbit through his teachings and writings, which were bolstered in discussions at The Club, a gathering place for artists that was established on 8th Street in 1949 and counted among its members de Kooning,

Pollock, Kline, Reinhardt, Philip Guston, and John Cage. From 1950 until 1960, The Club sponsored lectures every Friday evening on a variety of topics, from Freudianism and Jungianism, to Marxism, Existentialism, and Zen. At The Club, artists experienced Cage's 1950 "Lecture on Something" and "Lecture on Nothing," both of which conjured the notion of pure emptiness, and they were treated to a 1951 lecture on Asian art by the mythologist Joseph Campbell. In 1954, The Club presented a series of talks on Japanese art and philosophy, which included a talk by Hasegawa on the potential of Western abstraction to reinvigorate Japanese painting, an interpretation of Hasegawa's take on Zen by Matsumi Kanemitsu, and a panel on Zen led by Harry Holtzman; in 1955, it hosted a discussion with the psychologist Martha Jaeger titled "Zen and Psychoanalysis."¹⁹ Zen—or at least its Westernized interpretation—was of great interest to the Abstract Expressionists, for its emphasis on clarity of mind, the quiet authority of the inner voice, and the inevitability of nature's processes and perpetual state of flux resonated with their pursuit of immediate and free creation.²⁰ Indeed, many Abstract Expressionists saw in Zen a way to divest their work of preconceived ideas, prescribed artistic standards, premeditated thought, and the predominance of rationality, and instead embrace the intervention of chance to create paintings that bled, seemingly spontaneously, to

the edges of the canvas. Zen's emphasis on emptiness and inner silence, moreover, as the source of creation and a precondition for self-knowledge found its parallel in the activation of interstices and the blank canvas found in many Abstract Expressionist paintings.²¹ According to the painter James Brooks:

Zen came in pretty strong to the Club and a good many members were receptive to it because it emphasized the pure confrontation of things rather than intellectualization . . . There was a deep felt need to confront things in a purer way, without bias, or as innocently as could be done . . . Zen did take quite a hold, or rather we had a great many talks about it. A great many people were interested in it. I certainly was at the time. . . I think it affected us all . . . in our general attitude, whether we thought that we accepted it or not.²²

New York School members' interest in Asian art and philosophy, particularly Zen, is suggested in the work of several Abstract Expressionist painters. Reinhardt's study of Asian art, for example, is well known and extensively documented, and the apparent absence of his hand—and by extension his mind and ego—in the imperceptible brushwork of his nearly monochromatic paintings echoes Zen's principle of non-action. In his lectures and writings he emphasized the

importance of anonymity, and he described the tension between solid and void and the dissolution of form into nothingness that he perceived in Chinese painting (plates 34 and 35). Guston drew upon Zen's concept of mindfulness in the focused impulsiveness with which he approached his painting, for his practice was to arrive at forms spontaneously, letting the configuration of marks on the canvas dictate his direction (plate 12). "I like a form against a background—I mean simply empty space," he wrote, "but the paradox is that the form must emerge from this background."²³ Similarly, Richard Pousette-Dart considered the artist a passive participant in the creation of a painting, and he habitually went into a meditative state of calm before applying brush to canvas (plate 33).²⁴ Sam Francis based his work on what he perceived to be the immeasurability of nature, and, inspired by the Zen concept of the void, created canvases dominated by unmitigated fields of empty space (plate 10). "What is more important in these paintings is not what is painted but what is not painted," he wrote, "the white is more important than the blue."²⁵ Motherwell became interested in Zen in the 1960s and, like Francis, incorporated the empty white of the canvas into his compositions (plate 24). And Gottlieb's paintings align with Japanese calligraphy in their loosely circular forms, which float against fields of pure color and suggest imaginary landscapes (plate 11). In fact, Chinese and

Japanese ink painting, with its emphasis on speed of execution and the sophisticated mastery of the brush, influenced numerous Abstract Expressionists, and it, together with Zen, became an alternative—and sustaining—mode to automatism for artists such as Kline, Motherwell, de Kooning, Pollock, and even the sculptor David Smith.²⁶

Mark Tobey's well-known interest in Asian art and thought began in Seattle in the early 1920s with his study of calligraphy under the tutelage of the Chinese painter Teng Kuei, a student at the University of Washington. In 1934, he visited Teng in China to practice *sumi-e* painting with him before traveling on to Japan to study haiku and calligraphy at a Zen monastery outside Kyoto. His contribution to Abstract Expressionism lies in his "white writing" technique of applying white paint to a dark field in vivid calligraphic strokes, a practice (plate 44) that speaks to his study of Asian painting, yet earned him second-tier status in Greenberg's Abstract Expressionist pantheon. Greenberg denounced Tobey's work as "not major," and concluded that "its mode, which consists in dividing and subdividing within a very narrow compass of sensations, gives the artist too little room in which to vary and amplify. It is obligatory that Tobey work to expand his range."²⁷

Although Tobey, Greenberg's criticism notwithstanding, exhibited his work at New York venues such as the Guggenheim Museum and Willard Gallery, he found greater



success as an artist within the Northwest School, a group of Abstract Expressionists that includes the painters Morris Graves, Kenneth Callahan, and Paul Horiuchi, and the sculptor George Tsutakawa. These artists developed their careers far from the New York School ambit, in a city—Seattle—oriented more closely to the Pacific than to Europe.²⁸ It is in such regional centers that the influence of Asian art and thought on Abstract Expressionism is most demonstrable, and it is there that artists of Asian descent could practice largely free of critical discrimination. In Seattle, artists looked to a range of traditions from all over the Pacific, including those of the Native American peoples of the Northwest Coast and the Japanese diaspora, and Japanese American artists in particular drew upon their collective heritage and experiences as Nisei (second generation) raised largely in traditional families. Indeed, like the Hawai'i artists Doi, Abe, and Sato, artists such as Horiuchi and Tsutakawa were well versed in and inspired by Japanese visual culture, and they developed powerful modes of abstraction that expand the discourse around mid-twentieth-century Modernism.

Chikamasa Horiuchi—who called himself Paul after his idol Paul Cézanne—was born in Oishi, Japan, and he studied calligraphy and painting there as a young child before immigrating to Seattle as a teenager.²⁹ In Seattle, he was taken in temporarily by his older cousin, Shigetoshi Horiuchi, a dealer and

collector of Japanese antiquities, before traveling to Wyoming to join his family and begin a career with the Union Pacific Railroad (a career that was cut short with World War II and the subsequent discrimination against Japanese Americans). Throughout his adult life, Horiuchi had enjoyed moderate acclaim as a Sunday painter, but it was not until after the war and his permanent return to Seattle that he achieved success as a full-time artist. After a fall from a ladder left him unable to perform manual labor, he opened Tozai, an antique shop and gathering space for artists, and, under the influence of Tobey, tapped into his early exposure to Japanese aesthetics to develop the signature style that aligned him with Abstract Expressionism: collages made of torn rice paper dyed by hand in subtle earth tones and arranged in horizontal compositions evocative of Japanese screens (plate 15).

Tsutakawa was sent at the age of seven to live with his highly cultivated maternal grandparents in Fukuyama, Japan, and under their tutelage learned Kabuki and Noh drama, *ikebana* (flower arrangement), tea ceremony, and calligraphy. He returned to Seattle at the age of sixteen and during World War II was drafted into the Army; upon his discharge, after pursuing his M.F.A. at the University of Washington on the G.I. Bill, he embarked on a career as a sculptor.³⁰ Throughout his adult life, Tsutakawa visited Japan regularly, and in 1956, following one such sojourn, he began to apply his longstanding interest in

Asian culture and aesthetics to his work. This interest is suggested in his *Obos*, a series of freestanding abstract forms, which, stacked in harmony and perfect proportion, echo the ritual piles of stones Tsutakawa encountered in Japan and the Himalayas and constitute his most sustained contribution to Abstract Expressionism (plate 49). It is also, and most famously, revealed in the delicate linearity of his fountain designs, which, with their configurations of bent sheet metal through which water dances and flows in three-dimensional splendor, embody the harmony between nature and its inhabitants prescribed in Asian philosophy. Reminiscing about the influence of Asian thought on his work, he wrote:

For me, 1960 or thereabouts was a time to take another look at the philosophy and art of the Orient—particularly Japanese art—that I had become familiar with in my youth. Through my travels and my studies of traditional Japanese arts I was able to reaffirm my conviction in the Oriental view of nature which sees man as one part of nature, a part that must live in harmony with the rest of nature.

From 1960, I attempted to express this relationship between man and nature in my works. . . . [My] fountain sculptures are an attempt to unify water—the life force of the universe that flows in an elusive cyclical course through eternity—with an immutable metal sculpture.³¹

The San Francisco Bay Area, like Seattle, was home in the postwar period to an iteration of Abstract Expressionism. With its sizeable Chinese and Japanese populations—the largest in the country—artists of Asian descent had thrived there since the turn of the twentieth century, participating actively in organizations such as the San Francisco Art Association and the East West Art Society, exhibiting their work in area museums, running photography studios, creating public murals, and serving on the faculties of local colleges and universities.³² In this Bay Area context, the painter George Miyasaki and the sculptor Ruth Asawa built highly successful practices as studio artists and educators. Born in Kalopa, Hawai‘i, Miyasaki moved to California to pursue a career in commercial art before shifting his emphasis to the fine arts under the influence of the painters Richard Diebenkorn and Nathan Oliveira, with whom he studied at the California College of Arts and Crafts (plate 22). Upon graduation, he took a professorship at the University of California, Berkeley, teaching printmaking and running the university’s print studio. When Willem de Kooning, on a trip to the Bay Area, visited the studio to try his hand at lithography, Miyasaki (with Oliveira) collaborated, creating the series *Litho #1* and *Litho #2* (*Waves #1* and *#2*, plates 5 and 6), a noteworthy partnership between a member of the New York School and a Japanese



American abstractionist. Asawa studied at Black Mountain College with Josef Albers, who taught her to streamline her creative process and discover the essence of even the most pedestrian of materials, a methodology that served her well when she returned to the Bay Area to develop the hanging wire constructions for which she is best known.³³ Her graceful, unbroken forms—transparent, undulating, and designed to cast shadows—constitute exquisitely staged environments that suggest ties to installation art and roots in the Bauhaus, while her focus on the immediate creative impulse aligns her with Abstract Expressionism. Her emphasis on the interplay between line and the interstices around it reflects her background, as a Nisei Japanese American, in the traditions of her ancestral culture and study of calligraphy (plate 4).

Hawai'i, too, was home to a group of Japanese American artists working in Modernist modes, who expanded the discourse of abstraction as a highly localized iteration. Doi, Abe, and Sato, together with the sculptor Bumpei Akaji and the painters Sueko Kimura, Keichi Kimura, and Tetsuo Ochikubo, all, to varying degrees, elaborated the notions of nature and place so central to the arts of Hawai'i and developed languages of abstraction that operate at the intersection between East and West.³⁴ These artists also shared a specific set of experiences that included their traditional

Japanese childhoods, their early exposure to art in Hawai'i's schools, their formal artistic training abroad, and their highly successful careers when they returned to the Islands. Like their counterparts in Seattle and San Francisco, they navigated their common background as Nisei Japanese Americans in their practices as artists, yet, significantly, they resisted this heritage both in their comprehensive embrace of Modernism and in their collective decision to become artists over more conventional professions, a move that inspired subsequent generations of Hawai'i artists. In 1954, these artists entered the local public spotlight when Abe, Sato, Akaji, and Ochikubo, together with Jerry Okimoto, Edmund Chung, and James Park, organized an exhibition of their work at a house slated for demolition on Metcalf Street near the University of Hawai'i. The project—and the group—became known as the Metcalf Chateau, and caught the attention of then Honolulu Academy of Arts Director Robert Griffing, who gave them a group show at the museum, solidifying their status as Hawai'i's first native modernist movement.

Akaji worked alongside the painters Doi and Reuben Tam as a youth on Kaua'i, and he became inspired by the sculpture, frescoes, and mosaics that he saw in Florence and Ravenna as a soldier in Italy during World War II and as a student there on the G.I. Bill upon his discharge. In 1950, he earned his M.F.A. from the University of

Hawai'i—the school's first—and he went on to teach himself to weld alongside Abe and develop his signature pounded and welded metal sculptures (plate 3). Over the course of his career he developed a highly recognizable body of bas-reliefs and free-standing forms whose surfaces oscillate between two and three dimensions, abstraction and figuration, biomorphism and fabrication. Sueko Kimura studied at Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles, and, with Yasuo Kuniyoshi, at the Art Students League of New York, receiving a foundation in Modernism that found balance in the Noh drama, garden design, and calligraphy that she studied during a year spent in Kyoto, and that achieved full realization in her carefully executed and exquisitely designed abstractions (plate 20). Keichi Kimura also studied at Chouinard and in New York, and in his paintings and pastels he conjured a personal symbolic language evocative of arcane myths and fantastic landscapes, as well as a methodology of layering carefully chosen pastel hues in shimmering abstractions (plates 18 and 19). Ochikubo was born in Waipahu on central O'ahu and, after World War II, attended the Art Institute of Chicago on the G.I. Bill and went on to pursue his M.F.A. at Syracuse University. In 1953 he spent a year in Japan, studying traditional brush painting and connecting with his ancestry, and his work, with its nuanced balance between forms and space, embraces

the subtle refinement of the Japanese aesthetic, even as his palette reflects the nuanced shades of the Pacific Ocean and his life in Hawai'i as a waterman (plate 28).

The ceramist Toshiko Takaezu and the painter Reuben Tam both forged careers in the greater New York Area—Takaezu in Princeton, and Tam in Brooklyn—but their work, like that of their local counterparts, each in its way bears the imprint of the landscape and culture of Hawai'i. Born in Pepe'ekeo, Hawai'i, Takaezu was introduced to pottery through the Hawaii Potters' Guild; took classes with Louis Pohl, Claude Horan, and Ralston Crawford at the University of Hawai'i; discovered a mentor in the esteemed ceramist Maija Grotell at Cranbrook Academy in Michigan; and taught ceramics at Princeton University. Like most Hawai'i-born Nisei in the postwar period, she was exposed to Japanese culture as a child, and on a 1955 trip to Okinawa, she had the opportunity to reconnect with her ancestry. In Okinawa, she studied Buddhism and tea ceremony in a Zen temple before going on to Kyoto to visit the master potter Kaneshige Toyo. Her exposure to Zen culture and philosophy is born out in her closed ceramic forms, which she created spontaneously and intuitively, allowing shapes to materialize through actions and reactions, and inviting the glazes on their surfaces to emerge entirely by chance in the firing process (plate 42).

Tam was born in Kapa‘a, Kaua‘i, and attended the University of Hawai‘i before relocating to New York to study at Columbia University—where he took classes with the eminent art historian Meyer Schapiro—and at the New School for Social Research. From 1946 until his retirement in 1970, he taught at the Brooklyn Museum of Art School, dividing his time between Brooklyn during the academic year and Monhegan Island, Maine, in the summer. His lifetime on islands—first on Kaua‘i, and later on Monhegan—is reflected in his sustained exploration of natural phenomena in his abstractions, whose vivid hues and abrupt, even violent, formal transitions evoke the intersection of land and water that he experienced daily in his coastal homes (plate 43). “When you live on an island,” he wrote:

Not surrounded by the works of man, but by the elemental forces, sea, earth, sky and the interaction among them, you always live with the sense of time and change. There one is especially conscious of atmosphere, temperature, fog, wind, air currents, all of which are invisible, but can be made visible through paint. On an island coastline, geological history is laid bare; one reads the basic things that land really is, the earth tremors, the rise and fall and stratification of land as the earth’s crust is formed. It’s not the beguiling scenic aspects of a place that I want, but its geomorphology, its origins.³⁵

The work of Japanese and Japanese American artists—in New York, in Seattle, in San Francisco, and in Hawai‘i—has, like the influence of Asian art and philosophy, been long overlooked in the history of Abstract Expressionism. Yet, numerous artists of Asian descent worked and exhibited alongside their New York School counterparts, who, in turn, absorbed the lessons of Asian art and philosophy through contact with modernist interpretations of calligraphy, gatherings focused on Chinese and Japanese art and philosophy, and widely circulated writings on Zen. Abstract Expressionism went on to take hold in metropolitan centers on the West Coast and in Hawai‘i, where artists, many of them of Asian descent, assimilated the art and philosophy of their ancestral cultures and developed forms of abstraction that were varyingly, and powerfully, centered on spirituality and place. Taken together, these artists, the discourses they enacted, and the impact of their presence both within the New York School and in the broader context of mid-twentieth-century abstraction expand the critical dialogue around Abstract Expressionism to include their own, alternate, voices, philosophies, cultures, and ideas, and in doing so they amplify the impact and significance of America’s first native school of Modernism.

Notes

- 1 Saburo Hasegawa, “Furansu to Amerika kara no tayori, atarashii Seiyō to furui Tōyō ni kansuru zuisō,” *Garon* 2 (1951), 131, quoted in Bert Winther-Tamaki, *Art in the Encounter of Nations: Japanese and American Artists in the Early Postwar Years* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press), 39.
- 2 Letter from Franz Kline to Hasegawa, published in Hasegawa, “Furansu,” quoted in Tamaki, *Art in the Encounter of Nations*, 57.
- 3 Thomas Hess, *Abstract Painting, Background and American Phase* (New York: Viking Press, 1951).
- 4 Clement Greenberg, “‘American-Type’ Painting” (1955, revised 1958), in Greenberg, *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 229.
- 5 For Greenberg’s writings, see John O’Brien, ed., *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, 4 vols. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986–93).
- 6 Harold Rosenberg, “The American Action Painters,” *Art News* (December, 1952), quoted in Ellen Landau, ed., *Reading Abstract Expressionism: Context and Critique* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 191.
- 7 Histories of Abstract Expressionism published in the past two decades have revised prevailing views on mid-century abstraction. See especially Winther-Tamaki, *Art in the Encounter of Nations*; Ann Eden Gibson, *Abstract Expressionism: Other Politics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997); Joan Marter, *Abstract Expressionism: The International Context* (New Brunswick, N.J. and London: Rutgers University Press, 2007); and Joan Marter, ed., *Women of Abstract Expressionism* (Denver, Co.: Denver Art Museum, in association with New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016).
- 8 For the contribution of Asian Americans to mid-twentieth-century abstraction, see Thomas Messner and Anne L. Jenks, *Contemporary Painters of Japanese Origin in America* (Boston: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1958); and more recently Jeffrey Weschler, ed., *Asian Traditions, Modern Expressions: Asian American Artists and Abstraction, 1945–1970* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, in association with New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1997); Daniel Cornell and Mark Dean Johnson, eds., *Asian American Modern Art: Shifting Currents* (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, in association with Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2008); and Gordon H. Chang, et al., *Asian American Modern Art: A History* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1998).
- 9 Such expectations unfolded against the historical backdrop of long-standing discrimination in the United States against people of Chinese and Japanese descent, which left a vast majority of them ineligible for citizenship until the 1952 Immigration Act, and, for the generation in question, made them subject to internment as enemy aliens during World War II. See Karen Higa, “Some Notes on an Asian American Art History,” in *With New Eyes: Toward an Asian American Art History in the West*, exh. cat. (San Francisco: San Francisco State University Art Department Gallery, 1995) 11; and Elaine Kim, et al., *Fresh Talk / During Gazes: Conversations on Asian American Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003).
- 10 For Noguchi, see Dore Ashton, *Noguchi East and West* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1992); Amy Lyford, *Isamu Noguchi’s Modernism* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2013); and Isamu Noguchi, *A Sculptor’s World* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968).
- 11 Okada and Hasegawa, as well as their critical reception in the United States, are both discussed at length in Winther-Tamaki, *Art in the Encounter of Nations*.
- 12 For information about the Honolulu art scene in the mid-twentieth century, see Marcia Morse, *Legacy: Facets of Island Modernism* (Honolulu: Honolulu Academy of Arts, 2001).
- 13 Isami Doi to Satoru Abe, June 7, 1954.
- 14 Isami Doi to Satoru Abe, March 27, 1955.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 *Tadashi Sato: A Retrospective* (Honolulu: The Contemporary Museum, 2002).
- 17 Eugen Herrigel, *Zen in the Art of Archery* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953; first ed. 1948); Richard Wilhelm, trans., *I Ching / Book of Change* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967, first ed. 1950). For the reception of Eastern philosophy in the United States, see David James Clarke, “The Influence of Oriental Thought on Postwar American Painting and Sculpture,” (PhD diss., The Courtauld Institute, 1988); and Harry Harootunian, “Postwar America and the Aura of Asia,” in Alexandra Munroe, ed., *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989* (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, dist. D.A.P. / Distributed Art Publishers, 2009), 45–55.
- 18 For Suzuki’s influence in the United States, see Sarah Johnson, “Zen and Artists of the Eighth Street Club: Ibram Lassaw and Hasegawa Saburo,” (PhD diss., The City University of New York, 2005); Winther-Tamaki, *Art in the Encounter of Nations*; Clarke, “Influence of Oriental Thought”; and Harootunian, “Postwar America and the Aura of Asia.”
- 19 Johnson discusses these programs at length in “Zen and the Eighth Street Club.”
- 20 Clarke discusses the Abstract Expressionists’ understanding of Eastern philosophy in “Influence of Oriental Thought.”
- 21 Clarke, “Influence of Oriental Thought.”
- 22 James Brooks, interview with Dorothy Seckler, June 10, 1965, transcript p. 30, Archives of American Art. Quoted in Clarke, “Influence of Oriental Thought,” 77.
- 23 Philip Guston, interview with Harold Rosenberg, in *Philip Guston: Recent Paintings and Drawings*, exh. cat. (New York: Jewish Museum, 1965), quoted in Clarke, “Influence of Oriental Thought,” 216.
- 24 Clarke discusses Pousette-Dart’s interest in Asian philosophy in *ibid.* See “Influence of Oriental Thought,” especially Chapters 2 and 7.
- 25 Sam Francis, quoted in Betty Freeman, *Sam Francis: Ideas and Paintings* (unpublished manuscript, 1965). Quoted in Clarke, “Influence of Oriental Thought,” 154.
- 26 Clarke discusses the interest in Eastern art and philosophy on all of these artists. See *op. cit.*
- 27 Clement Greenberg, “Review of Exhibitions of Mark Tobey and Juan Gris,” *The Nation*, April 22, 1944, in O’Brien, ed., *Clement Greenberg*, vol. 1, 206.
- 28 For a comprehensive history of the Northwest School, see Patricia Junker, *Modernism in the Pacific Northwest: The Mythic and the Mystical* (Seattle: Seattle Art Museum, in association with Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2014).
- 29 For Horiuchi’s life and career, see Barbara Johns, *Paul Horiuchi: East and West* (La Conner, Wash.: Museum of Northwest Art, in association with Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2008).
- 30 For Tsutakawa’s life and career, see Martha Kingsbury, *George Tsutakawa* (Bellevue, WA: Bellevue Art Museum, in association with Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1990).
- 31 George Tsutakawa, “A Personal Statement,” *Pacific Northwest Artists and Japan*, exh. cat. (Osaka: The National Museum of Art, 1982), quoted in Kingsbury, *George Tsutakawa*, 13.
- 32 For these Bay Area artists, see Chang, *Asian American Modern Art*; Cornell and Johnson, *Asian American Modern Art*; Irene Poon Anderson, et al., *With New Eyes*; and Michael D. Brown, *Views from Asian California, 1920–1965: An Illustrated History* (San Francisco: Michael Brown, 1992).
- 33 For a comprehensive overview of Asawa’s work, see Daniel Cornell, et al., *The Sculpture of Ruth Asawa: Contours in the Air*, exh. cat. (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, in association with Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2006).
- 34 Morse, *Legacy*.
- 35 Quoted in George Ellis, et al., *Reuben Tam*, exh. brochure (Honolulu: Honolulu Academy of Arts, 1984). For more information on Tam, see Jennifer Saville, et al., *Archipelago: Recent Paintings by Reuben Tam*, exh. brochure (Honolulu: Honolulu Academy of Arts, 1991); and James Jensen, et al., *Paintings by Reuben Tam* (Honolulu: The Contemporary Museum, 1991).



CONJURING DRAGONS: Morita Shiryū and the Globalization of Abstract Expressionism

Stephen Salel

Abstract Expressionism and its Political Usage

Dragon Knows Dragon (*Ryū wa ryū wo shiru* 『龍知龍』, 1964, plate 23), a bold, gestural work of calligraphy by the Japanese artist Morita Shiryū 森田子龍, is as fitting an example of Abstract Expressionism as paintings by the most eminent representatives of that movement, such as Robert Motherwell and Jackson Pollock. The notion of American exceptionalism that proponents of modern art embraced in the aftermath of the Pacific War, however, barred artists of Asian descent

from acceptance into the canon of Abstract Expressionism. This discussion of Shiryū's artwork aims to acknowledge the nationalism that initially characterized the movement and to reconsider Abstract Expressionism as an international phenomenon.

The use of the term "abstract expressionism" to describe *Dragon Knows Dragon* may conflict with assertions by art critic Clement Greenberg, one of the foremost proponents of modernist American painting throughout the 1940s and 1950s, that the Abstract Expressionist movement was limited to a small stable of New York-based artists: Hans Hoffman, Adolph Gottlieb, Mark Tobey, Arshile Gorky, Franz Kline, Clyfford Still, Willem de Kooning, and, of course, Motherwell and Pollock. Greenberg

proclaimed that the talent of these nine men arose from their shared nationality—or, more precisely, their inheritance of the non-conformist spirit that gave birth to the American Revolution:

Advanced painting continues to create scandal when little new in literature or music does... This would be enough of itself to indicate that painting is the most alive of the avant-garde arts at the present moment, for only a substantial and meaningful newness can upset right-thinking people.... Labeled variously as "abstract expressionism," "action painting" and even "abstract impressionism," [these painters'] works constitute the first manifestation of American art to draw a standing protest at home as well as serious attention from Europe, where, though deplored more often than praised, they have already influenced an important part of the avant-garde.¹

While many critics sensed in the monochromatic linework of Tobey, Kline, and Motherwell an interest in Asian writing and ink painting, Greenberg's decision to portray Abstract Expressionism in terms of American exceptionalism ultimately forced him to reject the possibility of influence from foreign cultures, particularly those from East Asia:

[Franz] Kline's apparent allusions to Chinese or Japanese calligraphy encourages the cant, already started by [Mark] Tobey's case, about a general Oriental influence on "abstract expressionism." This country's possession of a Pacific coast offered a handy received idea with which to explain the otherwise puzzling fact that Americans were at last producing a kind of art important enough to be influencing the French, not to mention the Italians, the British and the Germans.

Actually, not one of the original "abstract expressionists"—least of all Kline—has felt more than a cursory interest in Oriental art. The sources of their art lie entirely in the West; what resemblances to Oriental modes may be found in it are an effect of convergence at the most, and of accident at the least.²

The inaccuracy of Greenberg's romantic statements about the national purity of Abstract Expressionism, however, can be revealed by little more than a cursory glance at the major art galleries in New York during the late 1940s through the 1950s. While the gallery of Betty Parsons consistently exhibited works by Newman, Pollock, Rothko, and Still from 1948 through the mid 1950s, she also represented several Japanese painters, including Shinoda Tōkō, Kawabata Minoru, and, most importantly, Kenzo Okada, to whom she offered eleven solo exhibitions between 1953 and 1981.

Miriam Willard Johnson, founder and director of the Willard Gallery, exhibited creations by Morris Graves and Mark Tobey, peripheral members of the Abstract Expressionist movement, as well as by the woodblock print artist Munakata Shikō, the painter Inokuma Genichirō, and the calligrapher Saburo Hasegawa. Martha Kellogg Jackson, owner of the Martha Jackson Gallery, collected works by numerous American Abstract Expressionist painters as well as Japanese members of the multimedia group Gutai Art Association. At the Osaka International Festival in 1958, Jackson co-sponsored the exhibition *The International Art of a New Era: Informel and Gutai*, which included works by Pollock, de Kooning, Motherwell, and Kline alongside twenty-seven Japanese artists.³

The Osaka festival offers an understanding of how the tenets of Abstract Expressionism—rejection of pictorial representation, the embrace of automatism and chance operations, and the unbridled expression of primal emotion through paint—guided a broader, global community of artists. Identifying themselves under the name Gutai (literally, “concreteness”), the Japanese contingent was led by the artists Shimamoto Shōzō and Yoshihara Jirō:

When two of Pollock’s paintings, *Number 11* (1949) and *Number 7* (1950), traveled to Japan for the first time and were shown at the third Yomiuri Independent

Exhibition (1951), Yoshihara was the lone voice of support in the Japanese art world... “As Jackson Pollock proves,” [Yoshihara wrote,] “drops of paint are more beautiful than that which they present.... One could say painting has purified itself: the elements of painting... are no longer lines or shapes, or colors: but lines and shapes as they appear in nature, colors as substance.” ...Yoshihara would develop this reading of the American artist even further in the Gutai Art Manifesto, writing that Pollock’s work “reveals the scream of the material itself, cries of the paint and enamel.”⁴

In Europe, meanwhile, the French proponents of Abstract Expressionism banded together under the movement Art Informel (literally, “formless art”), guided by Michel Tapié:

Michel Tapié... had a grand vision for the development of a new type of art, divorced of all styles. What was important... was the fact that artists of all types were actually now producing works which did not fit into any traditional category. Real artists were like sorcerer’s apprentices, conquistadors of virgin lands asking for new Eldorados, searching for ecstasy—an ecstasy only found in expressivity, in the heat of creation. This heat (*abstraction chaude*) was of course, the opposite of cold geometrical pondering (*abstraction froide*).⁵

Even as champions of Abstract Expressionism in New York saw the movement expand to a multinational scale, many of them still failed to appreciate the contributions of non-American participants, arguing that Japanese Gutai, French Art Informel, and American Abstract Expression were fundamentally distinct and must not be conflated. Accordingly, when Tapié arranged an exhibition of Gutai artists at the Martha Graham Gallery in 1958, the critic Dore Ashton and others dismissed their work as substandard and lacking in originality.⁶ To address this bias, Ming Tiampo cites the Eurocentricity that plagued Modernist thought; that is, the belief that only Western artists possess the cultural foundation necessary to appropriate ideas and images from the art of other nations.

Clearly, modernism continues to be a politicized story of invention and origins at the center disseminated to the periphery. Despite their innovations... and thus their necessity to modernism, Gutai artists are characterized as local, producing “competent yet rather provincial versions of European” art. It is not surprising, then, that discourses on modernism in Japan, and for that matter any non-Western nation, struggle to articulate a modernism that resists being seen as derivative.⁷

The fundamental belief that Paris was the birthplace and epicenter of Modernism leads us to interpret pivotal moments of cultural interaction in the movement’s formative years—Pablo Picasso’s decision to incorporate images of African masks into his paintings, for example⁸—as one-sided appropriation. If we dissociate Modernism from any single geographic location and think of it instead as a worldwide phenomenon that manifests itself differently in each culture, however, then we can more easily accept the existence of an Asian Modernism, in which the traditional art of calligraphy is thoroughly reinvented and revitalized, or a specifically Japanese Modernism, in which artists aim to produce an internationally inclusive form of calligraphy.

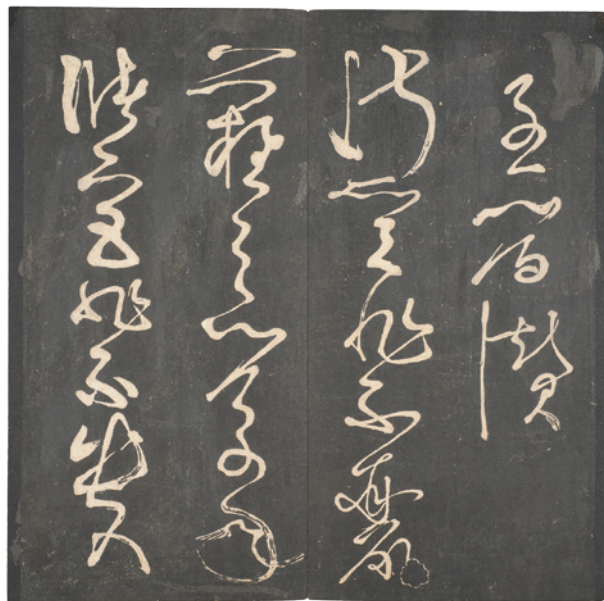
Non-Western Forms of Abstraction: Asemic Writing

In contrast to representational paintings that depict recognizable images from the physical world, Asian calligraphy is usually composed of Chinese characters (Chinese: *hànzì*; Japanese: *kanji*) or phonemes (Japanese: *kana*), and even

FIGURE 1. The Ideograph for “Dragon” written in the five styles of Chinese calligraphy.



FIGURE 2. Dong Qichang (1555–1636). *Model Calligraphies from the Hall of Playing Geese (Xihongtang Fashu)*, detail: vol. 7, rubbing of calligraphy by Zhang Xu (fl. 8th century). China, Ming dynasty (1368–1644), 1603. Set of 16 books, ink on paper. Honolulu Museum of Art, Purchase, 2003 (12388.2).



though the characters are more pictographic in nature than words from Romance languages, the degree to which their pictorial elements have been stylized and codified leaves them incomprehensible to an untrained reader. Individual Roman letters, which rarely possess meaning in themselves and whose shape has no relationship to that meaning, are even less revealing. Some might therefore argue that all written text is abstract in the sense that it is divorced from pictorial reference.

Although the term “abstract” implies visual distortion or dissociation from the physical world in a discussion of pictorial imagery, when the adjective is applied to the subject of written text, it is typically defined as “nonsensical” or “divorced from semantic meaning.” The synonym “asemic” is perhaps the most accurate term to describe this sort of eccentric, intentionally unintelligible style of writing. Like normal Chinese characters, asemic text intended to mimic that language can be written in any of the five styles of script: seal script (篆書, Chinese: *zhuànshū*, Japanese: *tensho*, commonly used in the latter half of the first millennium BC); clerical script (隸書, Chinese: *lishū*, Japanese: *reisho*, used c.450 BC to c.420 AD); semi-cursive script (行書, Chinese: *xíngshū*, Japanese: *gyōsho*, used first century AD to present); cursive script (草書, Chinese: *cǎoshū*, Japanese: *sōsho*, used first century AD to present), and regular script (楷書, Chinese: *kǎishū*, Japanese: *kaisho*, used c.200 AD to present).⁹ (figure 1.)

Some of the oldest examples of asemic writing date back to the Tang dynasty (618–907 AD). Zhang Xu 張旭, a native of Suzhou in Jiangsu Province, was known to produce divinely beautiful yet unintelligible works in cursive script. (figure 2.) These qualities of his calligraphy were usually attributed to either madness or a love of alcohol.¹⁰ Similar explanations were offered for the eccentric calligraphy of Buddhist priest Huai Su 懷素, who lived in the capital city of Chang’an (modern-day Xi’an) as an adult. The two artists are often mentioned together as “the crazy Zhang and the drunk Su” (顛張醉素 *dian Zhang zui Su*).¹¹ Perhaps the most famous work of abstract calligraphy in the late twentieth-century is *A Book from the Sky* (1987–1991; figure 3.), a four-volume, 604-page publication printed with meaningless, quasi-Chinese glyphs in regular script by the Chinese multimedia artist Xu Bing. While literally translating to “heaven writing” or “book from the sky,” when read in Chinese, the title of Xu Bing’s work, *Tiān Shū* 『天書』, means “nonsensical text.”

Though asemic writing is not categorically limited to the field of Asian art, the most famous examples of this genre in America or Europe, where calligraphy is not as widely recognized as fine art, date back only as far as the 1920s, when abstract artists sought to create a new lexicon of symbols with which to populate their works. One such artist was the Belgian painter Henri Michaux, whose texts *Alphabet* (1927; figure 4.) and

FIGURE 3. Xu Bing (born 1955). *Book from the Sky*, detail: page view. China, 1987–91.

Installation of woodblock-printed books and scrolls; ink on paper. Courtesy of Xu Bing Studio, New York.

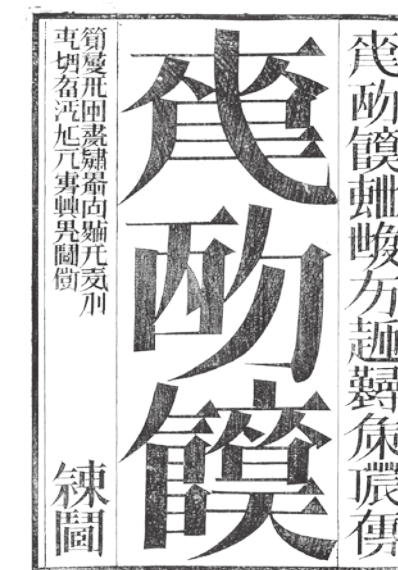


FIGURE 4. Henri Michaux (French, 1899–1984). *Alphabet: Dedicated to Jean Paulhan* (verso), 1927. Calligraphy, India ink on paper. Private collection.

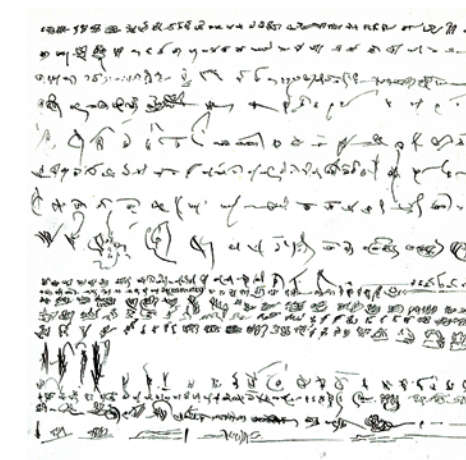




FIGURE 5. Wassily Kandinsky (Russian, 1866–1944). *Lines of Marks (Zeichenreihen)*, 1931.

Ink and tempera on paper. Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett, Geschenk Dr. h. c. Richard Doetsch-Benziger, Basel. Inv. 1939.388.

[Photo credit: Kunstmuseum Basel, Martin P. Bühler]

Narration (1927) were produced under the influence of hallucinogenic drugs. Perhaps not surprisingly, he seemed to have been partly inspired by an interest in Chinese, the study of which he documented in his sketchbooks.¹² Four years later, the Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky produced his painting *Lines of Marks* (1931; figure 5.), the alternate title of which—*Indian Story*—implies that the artist may have been inspired by Hindi, Sanskrit, or other languages from the Indian subcontinent.¹³ In his essay “Kandinsky: Russian and Bauhaus Years, 1915–1933,” Clark V. Poling notes:



FIGURE 6. Installation view of the exhibition “Abstract Japanese Calligraphy.” June 22–September 19, 1954. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Gelatin-silver print. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY.

[Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/
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[Photographer: Soichi Sunami]

As in certain of Kandinsky’s works, the isolation of separate elements in space, their clarity of definition and idiosyncratic composite character create the sense of... abstract hieroglyphs or signs set up in series. The boat elements in [*Lines of Marks*]... are more direct in their references and therefore are closer to pictographs.¹⁴

While the production of asemic texts by Western artists received little public attention throughout the first half of the twentieth century, in 1954, as the painters who we now

identify as Abstract Expressionists were first emerging, and merely a year before Clement Greenberg first published his essay “American-Type Painting,” modern Asian calligraphy became a topic of discussion throughout the United States. Arthur Drexler curated the Museum of Modern Art exhibition *Abstract Japanese Calligraphy* (June 22–September 19, 1954), which toured to several other museums throughout the country over the following four years. (figure 6.) The show included thirty-eight artists, and among them, Morita Shiryū would emerge as a titan within Japan’s community of avant-garde calligraphers.

The Philosophical Tenets Underlying Shiryū’s Style of Calligraphy

Born in modern-day Toyooka City, Hyōgo Prefecture in 1912, Morita Kiyoshi 森田清 adopted the pen name Shiryū around 1925, when he was studying calligraphy in the third grade of middle school.¹⁵ Shiryū began exhibiting his calligraphy around 1936 at the age of 24,¹⁶ and the following year, he moved to Tokyo to study calligraphy under Ueda Sōkyū. In 1943, he returned home, and five

years later, he moved to Kyoto City to immerse himself in its dynamic art community.¹⁷

In an essay published around the time of his move to Kyoto, Shiryū wrote about an unnamed American—perhaps a soldier associated with the Postwar Occupation of his country (1945–1952)—who, though unable to read Japanese, possessed an extraordinary ability to differentiate types of script and to appreciate the subtleties of a calligrapher’s brushwork. “He was untroubled by meaning,” Shiryū explains. “His sensitivity [was] freely and purely put in play... He [could] see the beauty of the line itself.”¹⁸ To more effectively appeal to viewers such as this, Shiryū began to form asemic texts out of newly invented pseudo-characters that, while adhering to the formal structure of phonemes (*kana*) and Chinese characters (*kanji*) and thereby preserving the visual sensibility of traditional Japanese calligraphy, possessed no lexical meaning (*moji-sei* 文字性; literally, “sense of character”) and therefore could be appreciated equally by diverse linguistic communities.

Two strong influences on the distinctive approach to calligraphy that Shiryū was developing at this time were his teacher Ueda Sōkyū, and, in turn, Sōkyū’s teacher Hidai Tenrai. Tenrai was convinced that the work of ancient calligraphers—specifically those active up until the Tang dynasty (618–907)—was remarkably expressive, but he lamented that post-Tang successors focused myopically on form and inadvertently failed

FIGURE 7. Hidai Tenrai (1872–1939). *Flight (Tobi)*.
Japan, 1920. Framed panel; ink on paper.
Collection of Iwakiyama Jinja, Japan.



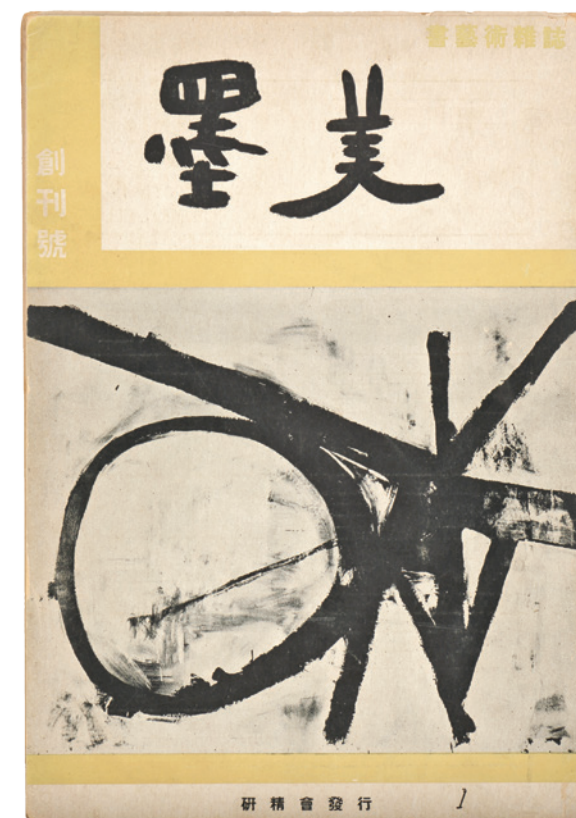
FIGURE 8. Ueda Sōkyū (1899–1968). *Love (Ai)*.
Japan, 1951. Two-panel screen; ink on paper. Private collection.



to appreciate the emotional resonance of the old texts. To master their craft, he believed, modern calligraphers should faithfully study ancient texts that had been carved in stone and reproduced as rubbings. Despite his traditionalism, Tenrai's commitment to the expressionistic potential of calligraphy imbued his large-scale works with a distinctly modern sensibility.¹⁹ (figure 7.)

Like his teacher, Ueda Sōkyū believed that the art of calligraphy had become ossified through blind adherence to tradition, but disregarding Tenrai's concern for formal style, he sought to liberate calligraphy from its basis in language. Sōkyū's most infamous work, *Love (Ai)* 『愛』, 1951), was displayed in the 7th Annual Japan Art Exhibition, sponsored by the Japanese national government. What shocked viewers was that, rather than using the ideograph for “love,” Sōkyū's work was composed of nothing other than a design resembling the character “hin” 品 (also pronounced “shina”), which, depending upon its context, means either “item” or “elegance.” When questioned by the exhibition's jurors, the artist explained that his work was abstract and that its appearance need not in any way correspond to its title.²⁰ (figure 8.) When considering the calligraphy of Morita Shiryū, despite its close alignment with the Abstract Expressionism produced by American painters, its emotionally evocative, abstract linework was primarily influenced by Tenrai and Sōkyū.

FIGURE 9. *Bokubi (Beauty of Ink)*, Issue No. 1, June, 1951, detail:
cover. Featuring the painting *Hoboken*, 1950, by Franz Kline.



Through both the monthly journal *Bokubi* 『墨美』 (*Beauty of Ink*), which he edited from 1951 to 1980, and the calligraphy salon *Bokujinkai* 墨人会 (Society of People of Ink) which he co-founded in 1952 with Inoue Yūichi (1916–1985) and three other Kyoto-based artists, Shiryū promoted aspects of his calligraphy—its bold gesturality, its grand scale, its use of asemic text, and, in particular,

its relevance to the American avant-garde art scene.²¹ The first issue of *Bokubi*, published in June 1951, featured several works by Franz Kline that critics often described as “calligraphic,” including *Hoboken* (1960), *Chief* (1960), and *Cardinal* (1960). (figure 9.) During the early 1950s, Kline corresponded frequently with the members of Bokujinkai, and excerpts from several of his letters were reproduced in *Bokubi*.²² Shiryū's interest in American artists was not rooted in a belief that Japanese art was inferior but rather in the conviction that his medium had remained too insular, too provincial, and too resistant to change. In the aforementioned issue of *Bokubi*, the artist defined the mission of Bokujinkai:

1. To research the aesthetic and philosophic expression of calligraphy;
2. To see calligraphy in the context of the whole life of a human being;
3. To establish calligraphy on the basis of modern art and theoretical ideas;
4. To see calligraphy in the larger perspective of all the arts;
5. To expand calligraphy to a global scale;
6. To reexamine and rediscover the classics;
7. To elevate the social standing of calligraphy.²³

Alchemy and Incantation in Shiryū's Calligraphy

While striving to clarify the active role that Japanese calligraphers played in modernism and, in particular, the international movement of Abstract Expressionism through the foundation of Bokujinkai and the publication of *Bokubi*, Morita Shiryū's energy was primarily focused upon the calligraphy that he produced in his studio. In around 1951, when the inaugural issue of *Bokubi* was published, the style of his artwork underwent a remarkable transformation. He began to use brushes of unconventionally grand scale—some several feet in length—and, accordingly, the texts that he wrote were reduced to a few, bold characters.²⁴ (figure 10.) This stylistic change, however, resulted in a cascade of technical problems.

The material that most calligraphers use—sticks or cakes of soot and gelatin that they grind against an inkstone and mix with water to produce India ink (Japanese: *sumi*)—are designed for small-scale writing with lines measuring an inch or less in width. To produce characters with strokes more than six inches wide, Shiryū needed to produce so much ink that the grinding at times took an entire day and left him exhausted. Though pre-liquified ink (Japanese: *neri-zumi* or *bokujū*), which

became commercially available around 1954, was able to save him from this labor, that ink displays numerous, inherent defects when used for large projects, such as its tendency to shrink, crack, and flake off the paper.²⁵

Whether he used ink cakes or pre-liquified ink, Shiryū further realized his ability to produce a large, beautiful stroke depended upon a variety of previously overlooked factors, such as the density and amount of

Figure 10. Portrait of Morita Shiryū, c. 1970.
The Works of Shiryū Morita, Selected by the Artist
(Kyoto: Bokubi Press, 1970): p. 7.



ink within his brush as well as the absorbency of the paper. If the paper was too absorbent, for example, the ink would bleed, but if the paper was less absorbent and the ink was too thin, then the stroke would dry unevenly. To resolve these issues and gain greater aesthetic control, throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s, the artist decided to customize his own ink with additives such as Bondo glue and carbon granules, and he experimented with curious techniques such as freezing one or more of the materials before mixing them together.²⁶ By the late 1960s, Shiryū had become so skillful in determining the precise color, viscosity, and sheen of his custom-made India ink that he began to incorporate into his calligraphy novel materials, such as lacquer and metallic paints, with great success.²⁷

At this technical peak in Shiryū's career, he created a number of works that focused upon the subject of dragons. His reasons for selecting this topic are open to speculation. Without question, dragon imagery had been used throughout Asia for millennia. The earliest known depiction was discovered in the Xinglongwa Village in Inner Mongolia and dates to c.6000 BC.²⁸ Some later works of Chinese art, such as the painted banner from the tomb of the Marquise of Dai in Mawangdui, Hunan, depict dragons within a Daoist pantheon.²⁹ Later, Indian texts, such as the 12th Chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra* (c.100 A.D.), which discuss how even the

daughter of a dragon (Sanskrit: *nāgakanya*) can attain enlightenment, clearly associate the mythical creature with Buddhism. Japanese dragons originate from various sources, including indigenous myths, but during the Momoyama (1573–1615) and Edo periods (1615–1868), some of the most famous depictions of the creatures were produced for Buddhist temples and emphasized their association with such figures as Avalokitesvara (Japanese: Kannon), the bodhisattva of Mercy.

In addition to such art historical associations, the meaning behind Shiryū's work on dragons may be a self-referential play upon his artist name Shiryū 子龍 (literally, “dragon child”). Since the phrase “dragon knows dragon” is not a famous proverb and was likely invented by the artist himself, such a self-referential meaning is quite likely.

All references to dragons in Shiryū's oeuvre are asemic texts, and accordingly, those creations are imbued with a distinctive sense of magic that arguably overshadows whatever literal meaning their titles may possess. Since works of wordless calligraphy float somewhere between the media of literature and painting, they name and depict their subject simultaneously. In this way, they can be thought of as incantations—when the viewer tries in vain to decipher the calligraphic marks as words, the shapes rebel and in defiance coalesce into a vague image of the creature itself.

Shiryū's use of materials also conveys a witty sense of prestidigitation. Among the four known versions of *Dragon Knows Dragon*, only the eight-panel screen produced in 1966 and currently owned by the Kyoto International Conference Center is monochromatic. The other three—a four-panel screen completed in 1969 and currently in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago, a single-sheet work on paper made in 1992 and owned by the Toyooka City Government, and this 1964 work on loan to *Abstract Expressionism: Looking East from the Far West* from Gallery Shibunkaku—were written in silver paint (polyvinyl acetate) permeated with flakes of aluminum on a black paper surface. As demonstrated in the famous tale of Zhang Sengyou 張僧繇, a Chinese artist active during the Liang dynasty (502–587), when a dragon painting is completed, if the artist is sufficiently skillful, the creature may very likely come to life, tear itself free from the surface of the painting, and fly away. In the case of Shiryū's three silver iterations of *Dragon Knows Dragon*, when the calligraphy was finished, he coated the work in yellow alkyd varnish, and although the dragons admittedly did not fly from the surface of the works, the beasts did suddenly radiate a majestic, warm aura as if transformed into gold through alchemy.

Conclusion

If we attempted to interpret the meaning of Shiryū's phrase "dragon knows dragon" beyond its witty reference to himself, we could safely presume that it describes two creatures—large in scale, mysterious, untamed, and dangerous—and their ability to know or recognize one another. At the time the first works of American Abstract Expressionism were produced, they were indeed viewed by conservative critics as "dragons." Edward Alden Jewell, art critic for the *New York Times*, confessed that the paintings of Adolph Gottlieb and Mark Rothko left him completely befuddled.³⁰ In response, the painters stated:

At our inception we stated, "We condemn artistic nationalism which negates the world tradition of art at the base of modern art movements."... As a nation we are being forced to outgrow our narrow political isolationism. ...it is time for us to accept cultural values on a truly global plane.³¹

Over 70 years later, we are still learning to understand and appreciate the movement of Abstract Expressionism—not merely as the group of artists active in New York, but

as part of a more transnational movement that involved Michel Tapié's Art Informel, Shimamoto Shōzō's and Yoshihara Jirō's *Gutai*, and, most important, Bokujinkai and its visionary leader, Morita Shiryū. Through exhibitions such as *The International Art of a New Era: Informel and Gutai* as well as

through journals such as *Bokubi*, these "dragons" of various nations came to know one another. In a similar fashion, through *Abstract Expressionism: Looking East from the Far West*, may the general public recognize and celebrate the common bond that these artists shared.

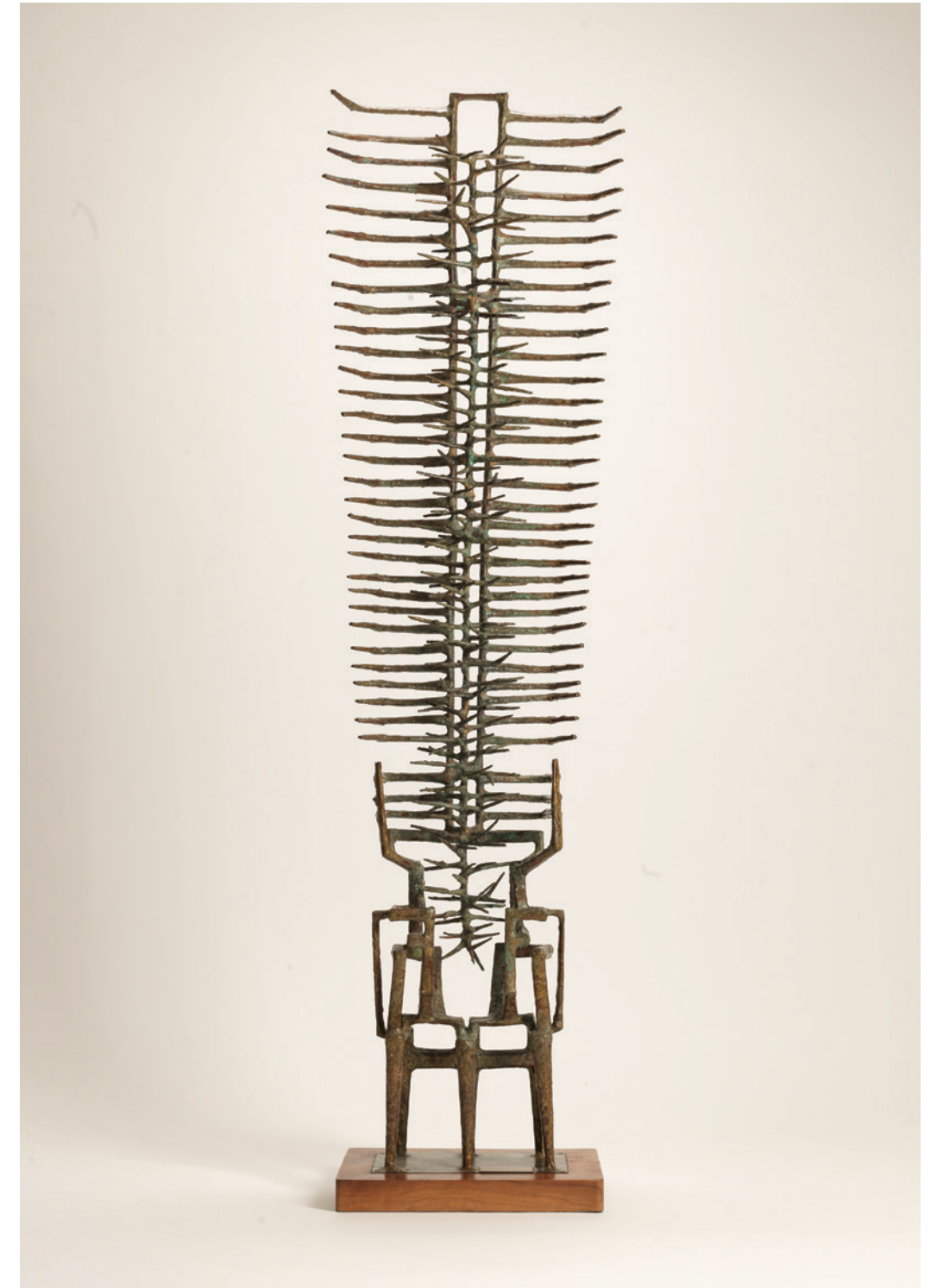
Notes

- Clement Greenberg, "'American-Type' Painting," (1955, revised, 1958), in Greenberg, *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 208–209.
- Ibid., 220. For an in-depth discussion of Greenberg's dismissive attitude towards Asian art, see Bert Winther-Tamaki, "The Asian Dimensions of Postwar Abstract Art: Calligraphy and Metaphysics," in Alexandra Munroe, *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989*, exh. cat. (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, dist. D.A.P. / Distributed Art Publishers, 2009), 145.
- Alexandra Munroe, *Contemporary Japanese Art in America I: Arita, Nakagawa, Sugimoto* (New York: Japan Society, 1987), 17. See also Winther-Tamaki, "The Asian Dimensions of Postwar Abstract Art," 145–46.
- Ming Tiampo, *Gutai: Decentering Modernism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 48–49.
- Joan M. Marter, *Abstract Expressionism: The International Context* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 35.
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- Herbert Allen Giles, *A Chinese Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 1 (New York: Paragon Book Gallery, 1975), 23–24.
- Ibid., 324. See also Peter Charles Sturman, *Mi Fu: Style and the Art of Calligraphy in Northern Song China* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 240.
- Nina Parish, *Henri Michaux: Experimentation with Signs* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007), 25–26.
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- Ibid., 78.
- Morita Shiryū, *Morita Shiryū to "bokubi"* (Hyōgo-ken: Hyōgo Kenritsu Kindai Bijutsukan, 1992), 4.
- This American-style calculation of Shiryū's age overlooks the Japanese convention, by which a person is considered to be one year old at the time of his or her birth.
- Morita, *Morita Shiryū*, 7.
- Bert Winther-Tamaki, *Art in the Encounter of Nations: Japanese and American Artists in the Early Postwar Years* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press), 76.
- Christine Flint Sato, "The Rise of Avant-Garde Calligraphy in Japan," in Timothy Wilcox ed., *Spring Lines: Contemporary Calligraphy from East and West*, exh. cat. (Brighton: Ditchling Museum, 2001), 19–20.
- Ibid., 22.
- Winther-Tamaki, "The Asian Dimensions of Postwar Abstract Art," 154. See also Munroe, *Scream Against the Sky*, 129.
- Kajiya Kenji, "Modernized Differently: Avant-Garde Calligraphy and Art in Postwar Japan," (paper presented at the conference "M+ Matters: Postwar Abstraction in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan," Hong Kong Arts Centre, Hong Kong, June 28, 2014), 7. See also Bert Winther-Tamaki, *Art in the Encounter of Nations: Japanese and American Artists in the Early Postwar Years* (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 57.
- Munroe, *Scream Against the Sky*, 131.
- Inada Sousai ed., *Remembrance: Notes on Morita Shiryū: The 100-Year Anniversary of Morita Shiryū's Birth: The 60-Year Anniversary of the Foundation of Bokujinkai (Sōki: Morita Shiryū nōto: Morita Shiryū tanjō hyakunen: Bokujin roku jū nen)* (Tokyo: Bokujinkai-Sōryūsha, 2012), 289.
- Ibid., 290.
- Ibid., 291–92.
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PLATES



1 Satoru Abe
The Idol, 1958





LEFT

- 2 Bumpei Akaji
And she was beautiful too,
1957

RIGHT

- 3 Bumpei Akaji
Untitled, 1980





4 Ruth Asawa
Untitled
(S.540, Hanging, Seven-Lobed,
Interlocking Continuous Form
within a Form), c. 1958





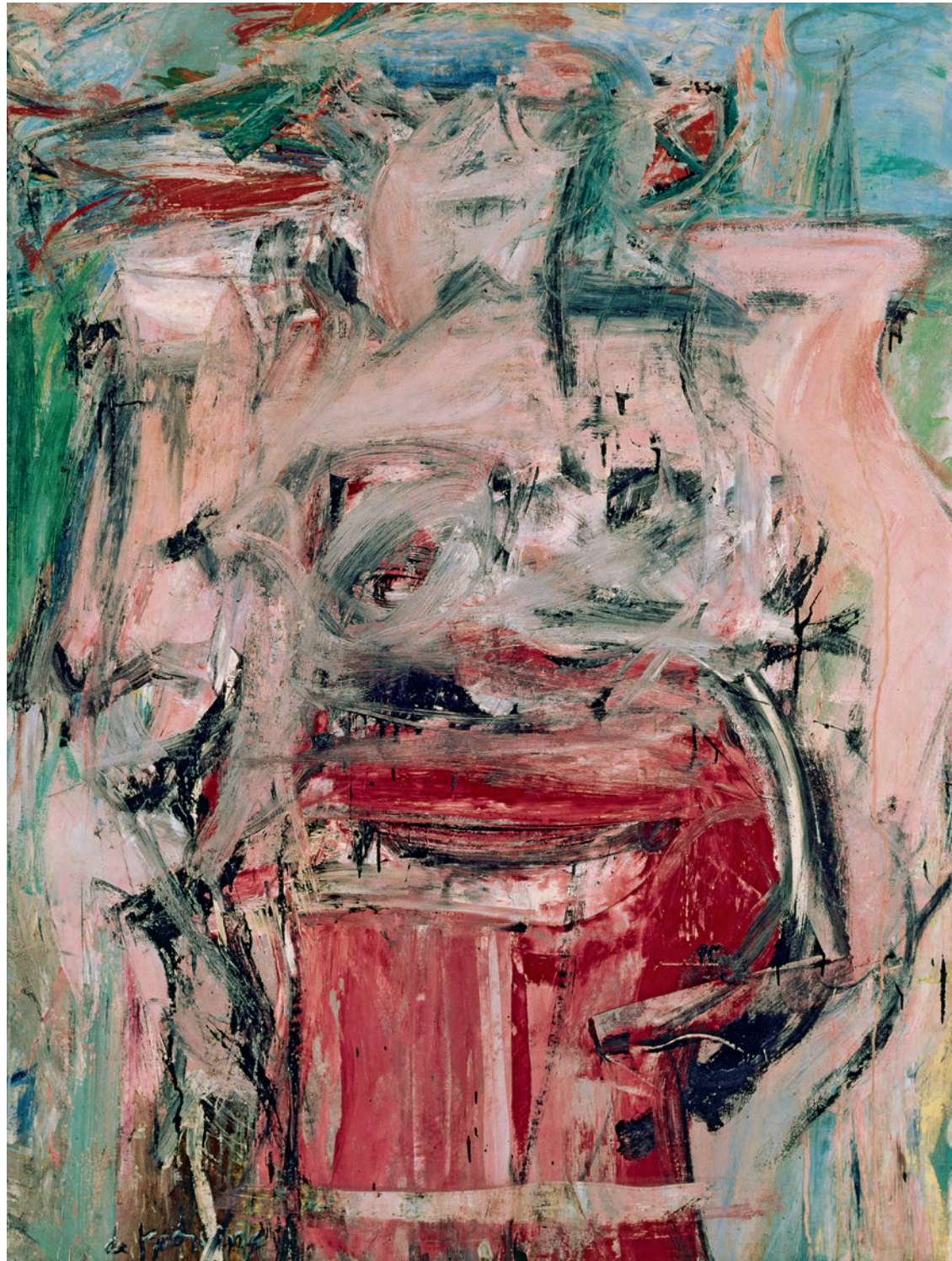
LEFT

5 Willem de Kooning
Litho #1 (Waves #1), 1960

RIGHT

6 Willem de Kooning
Litho #2 (Waves #2), 1960



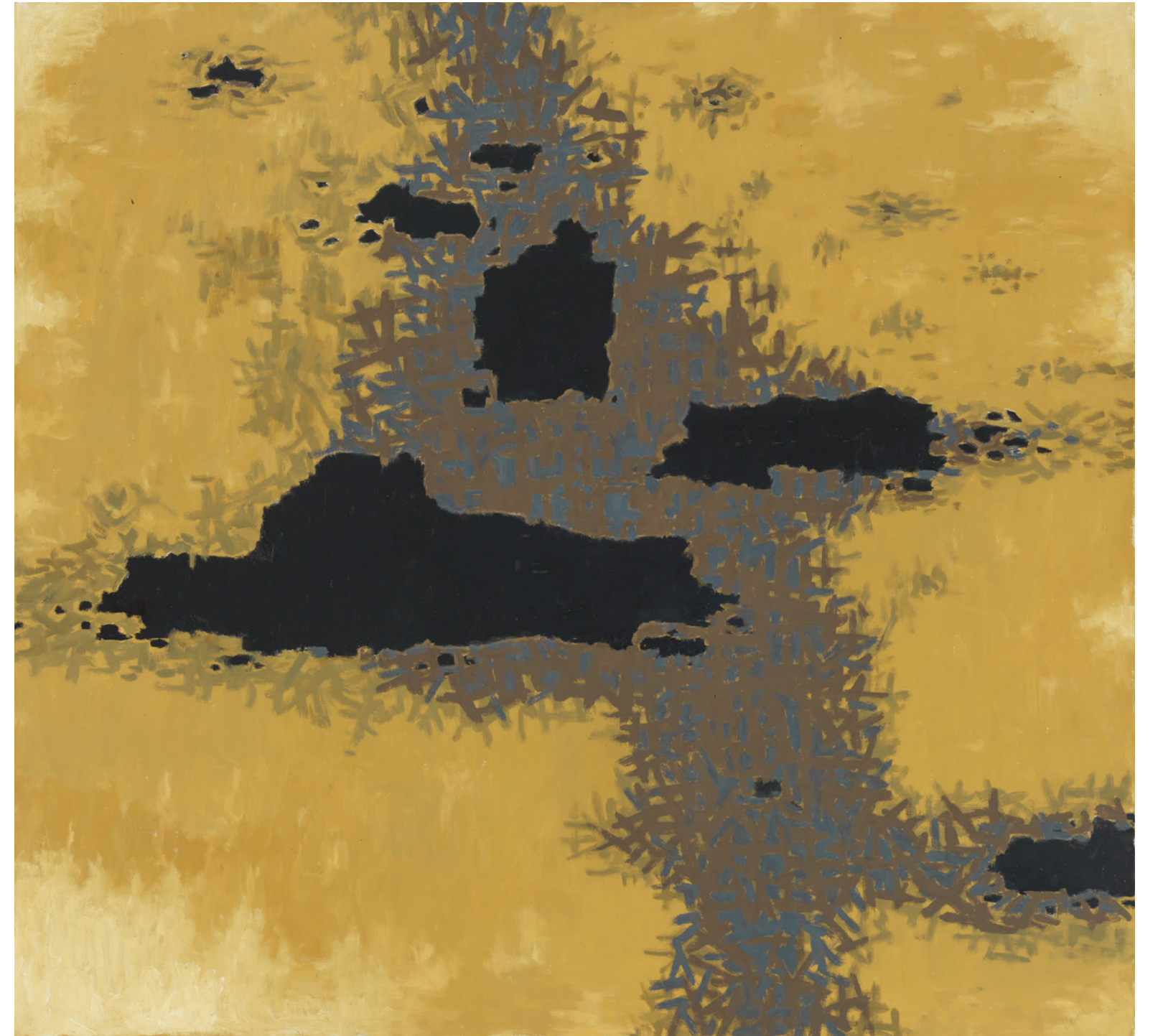


LEFT

7 Willem de Kooning
Woman as Landscape, 1954-5

RIGHT

8 Isami Doi
Ascetic, 1959





LEFT

9 Isami Doi
My Mystic Pilgrimage

RIGHT

10 Sam Francis
Black and Red, 1950-3

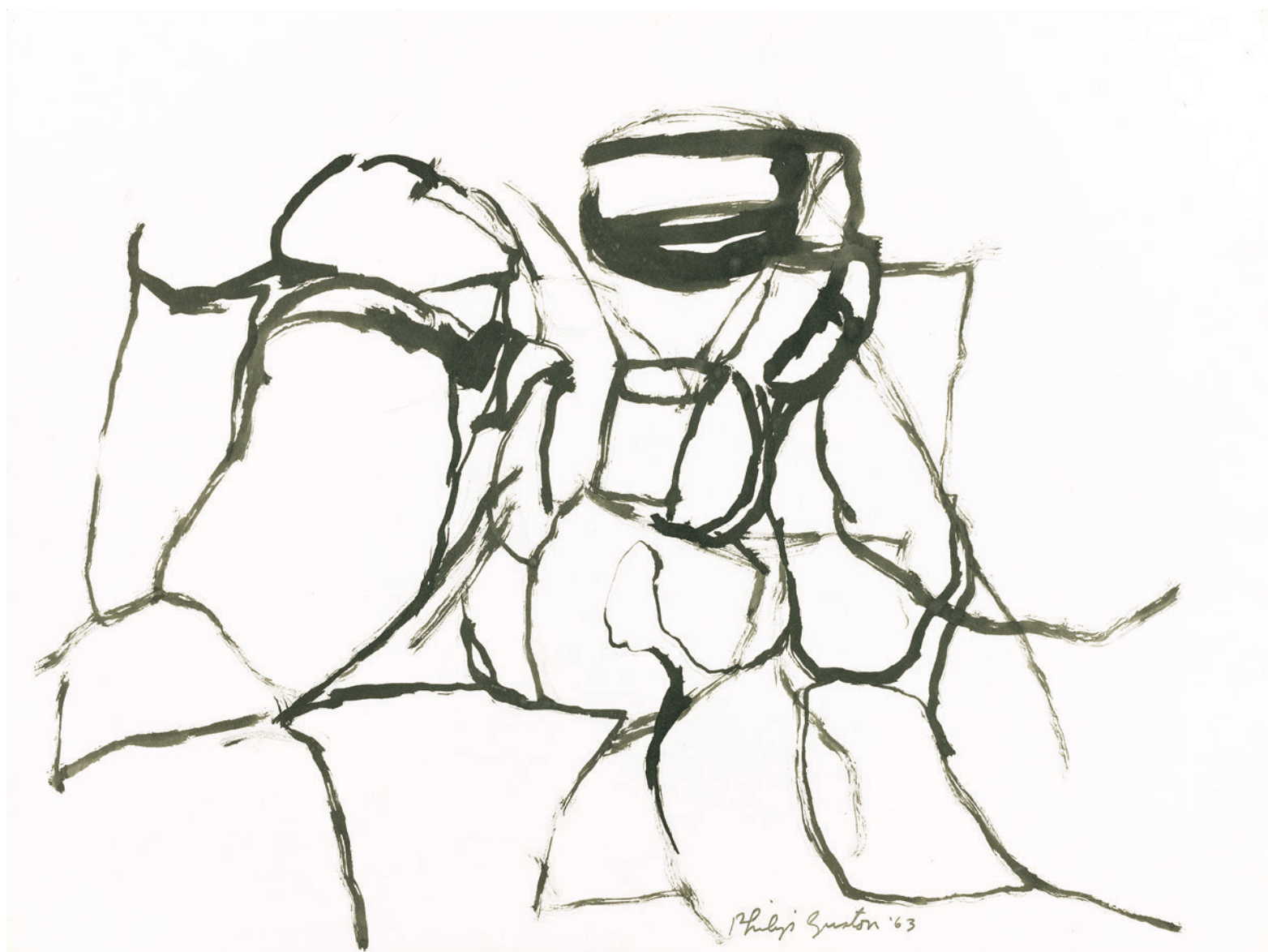




LEFT
11 Adolph Gottlieb
Edge, 1972

RIGHT
12 Philip Guston
Ceremony, 1957





LEFT

13 Philip Guston
Untitled, 1963

62



RIGHT

14 Saburo Hasegawa
Abstract Calligraphy, c. 1955-7

63



LEFT

15 Paul Horiuchi
Abstract Screen, 1961



RIGHT

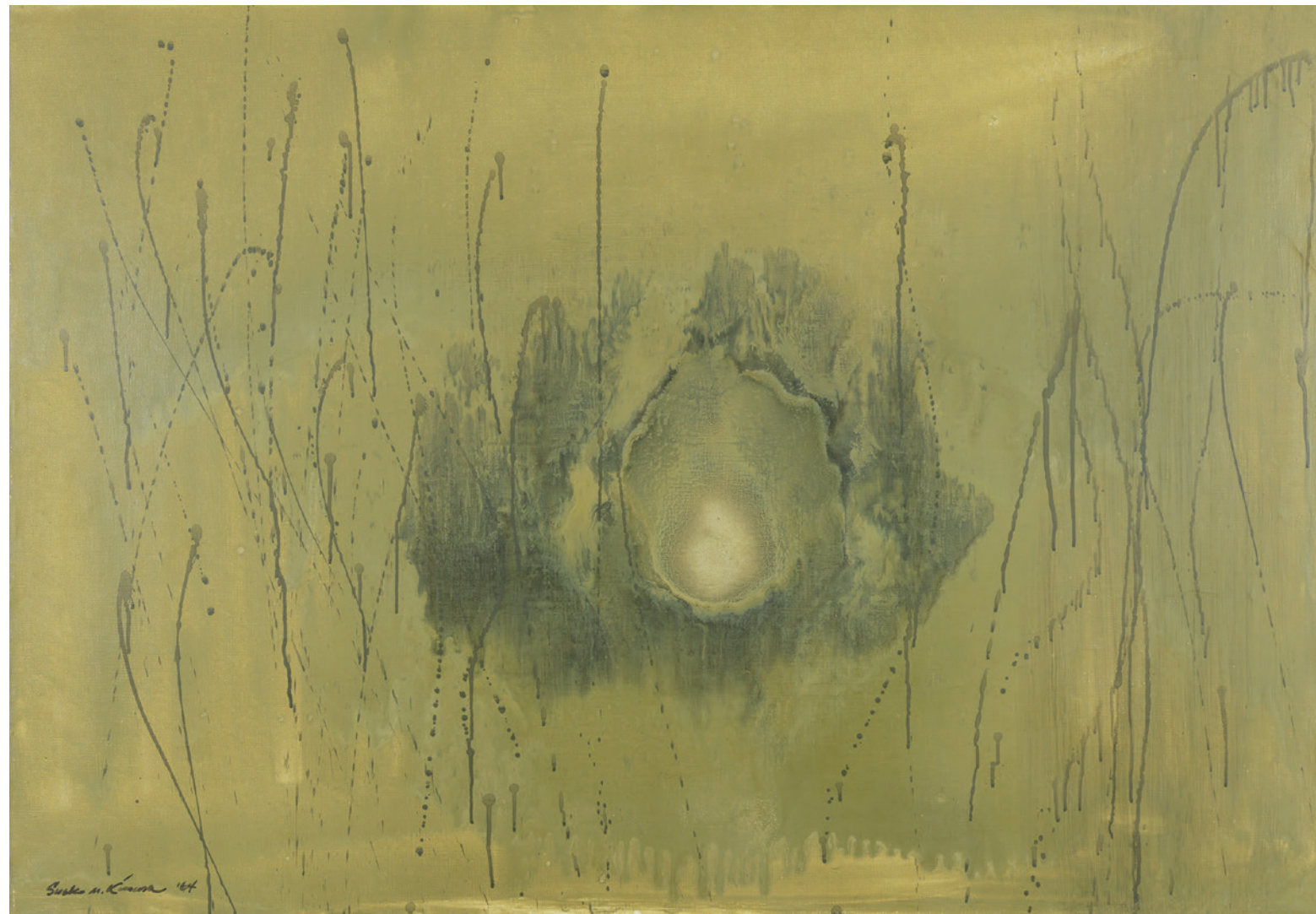
16 Paul Horiuchi
Awareness of Time, 1964



17 Ralph Iwamoto
Winter Mist, 1958



18 Keichi Kimura
Phoenix, 1972



LEFT

19 Keichi Kimura
Untitled

RIGHT

20 Sueko Kimura
Lost Garden, 1964



LEFT

21 Franz Kline
Corinthian II, 1961

72

RIGHT

22 George Miyasaki
Green Landscape, 1957

73



LEFT

23 Morita Shiryū
Dragon Knows Dragon (Ryū wa ryū o shiru), 1964

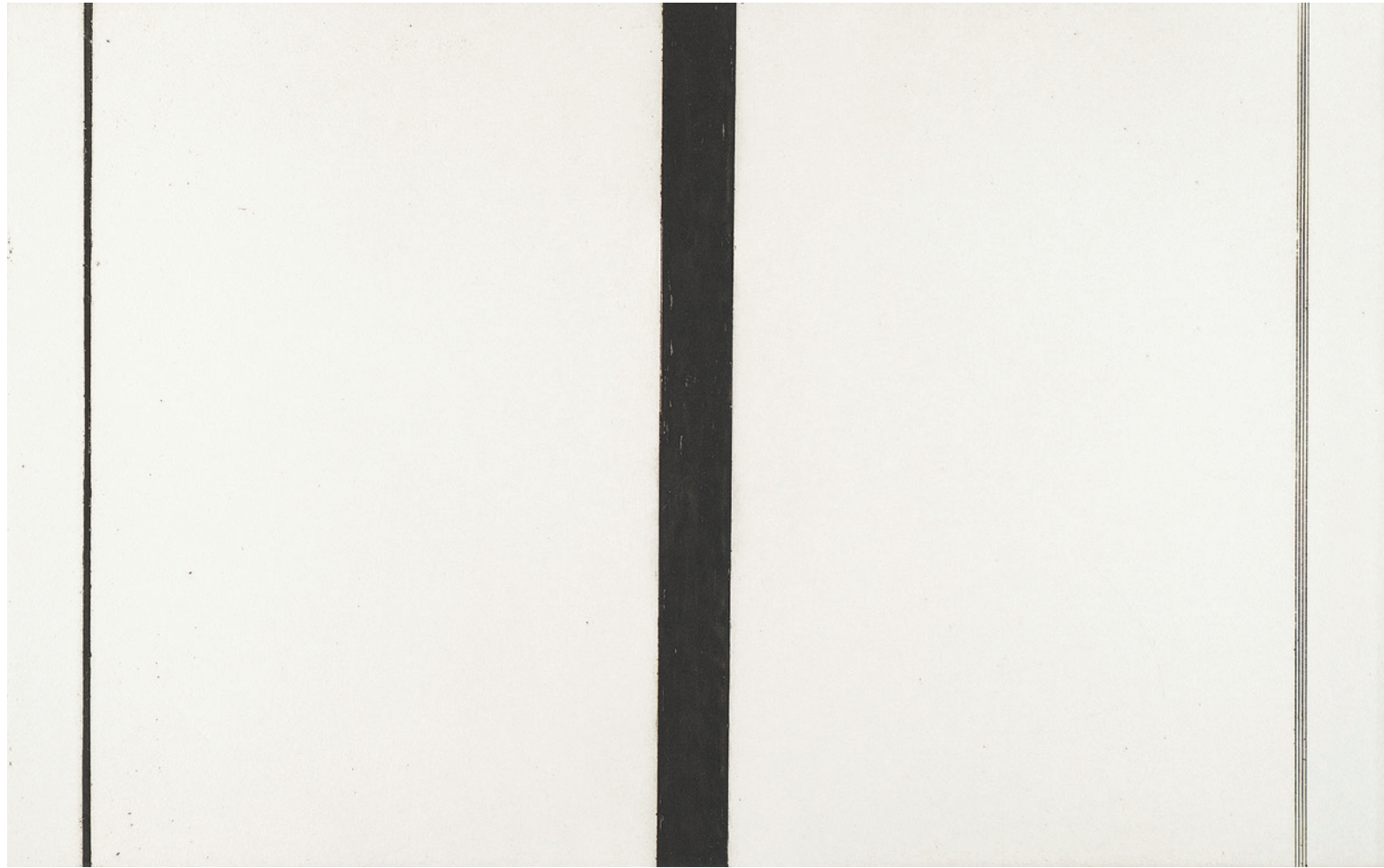
74



RIGHT

24 Robert Motherwell
Untitled, 1963

75



LEFT

25 Barnett Newman
Untitled Etching 1 (First Version), 1968



RIGHT

26 Isamu Noguchi
Red Untitled, 1965-6



LEFT

27 Isamu Noguchi
Victim, 1962

RIGHT

28 Tetsuo Ochikubo
All Things Exist, c. 1960–70





LEFT

29 Tetsuo Ochikubo
Untitled

RIGHT

30 Kenzo Okada
Turn, 1962





LEFT

31 Jerry Okimoto
Untitled



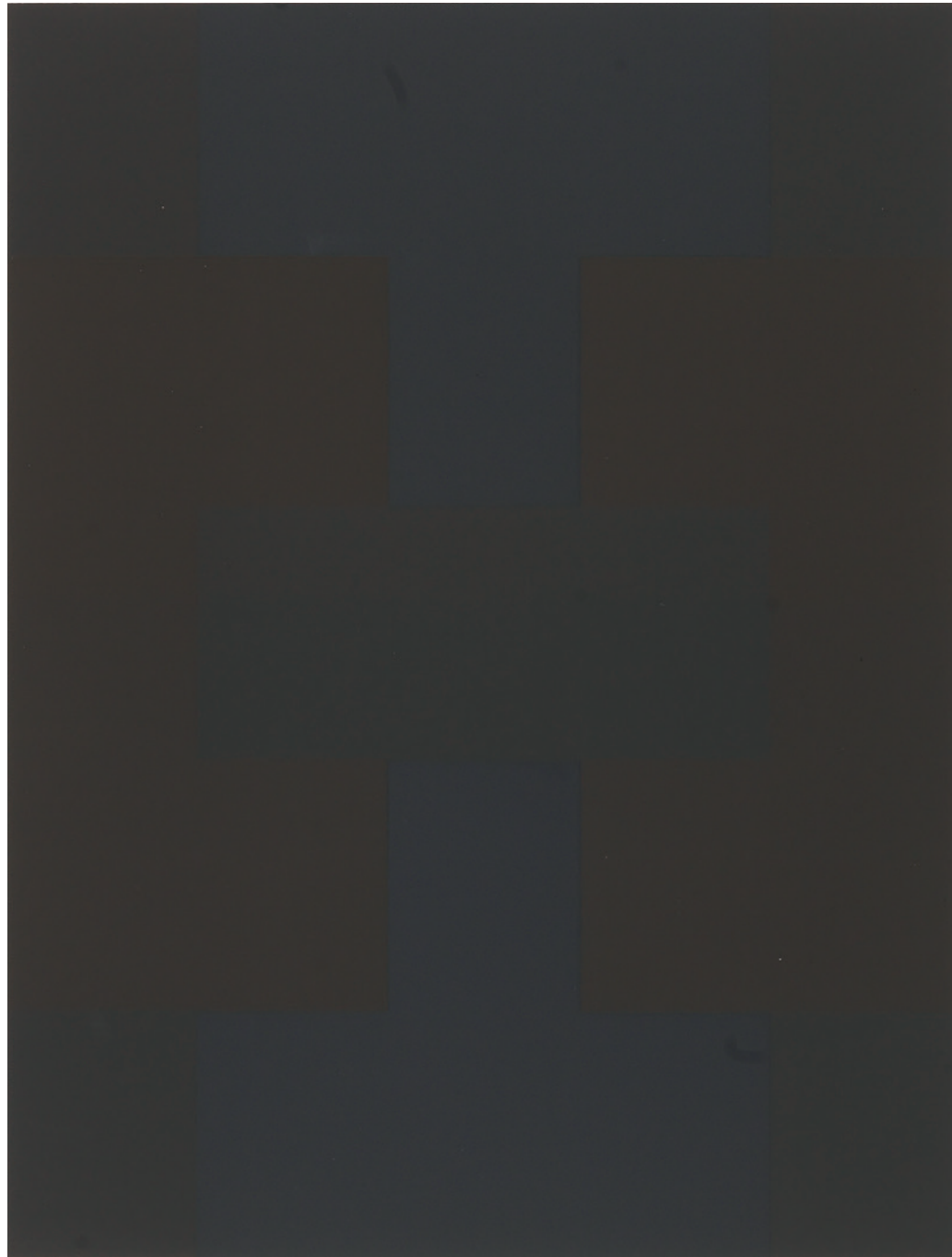
RIGHT

32 Jackson Pollock
Portrait of H. M., 1945



33 Richard Pousette-Dart
Savage Rose, 1951



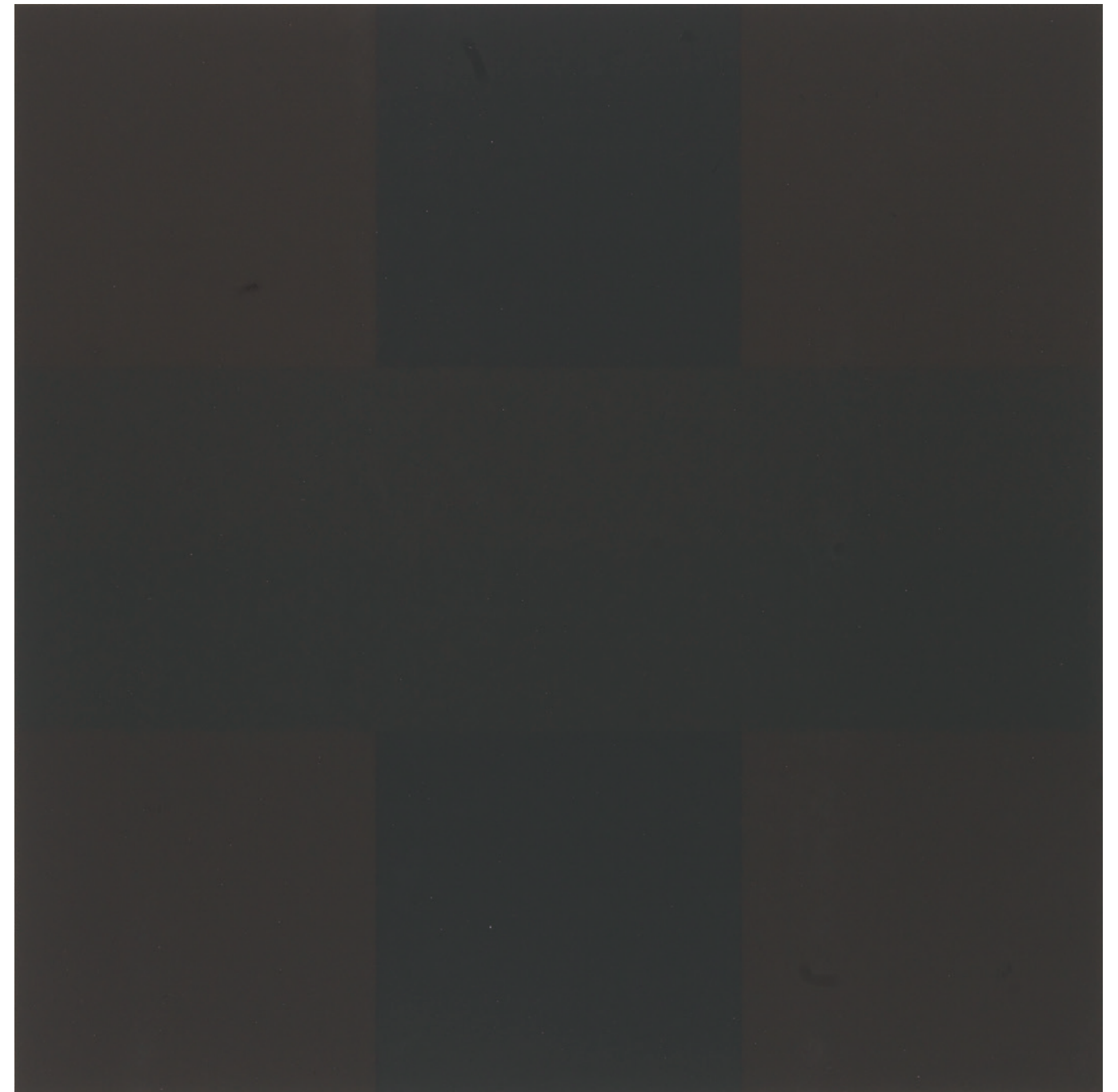


LEFT

34 Ad Reinhardt
Untitled #1 from the portfolio
Ten Screenprints, 1966

RIGHT

35 Ad Reinhardt
Untitled #10 from the portfolio
Ten Screenprints, 1966





LEFT

36 Mark Rothko
Untitled, 1968

RIGHT

37 Tadashi Sato
Composition with Red, 1958





LEFT

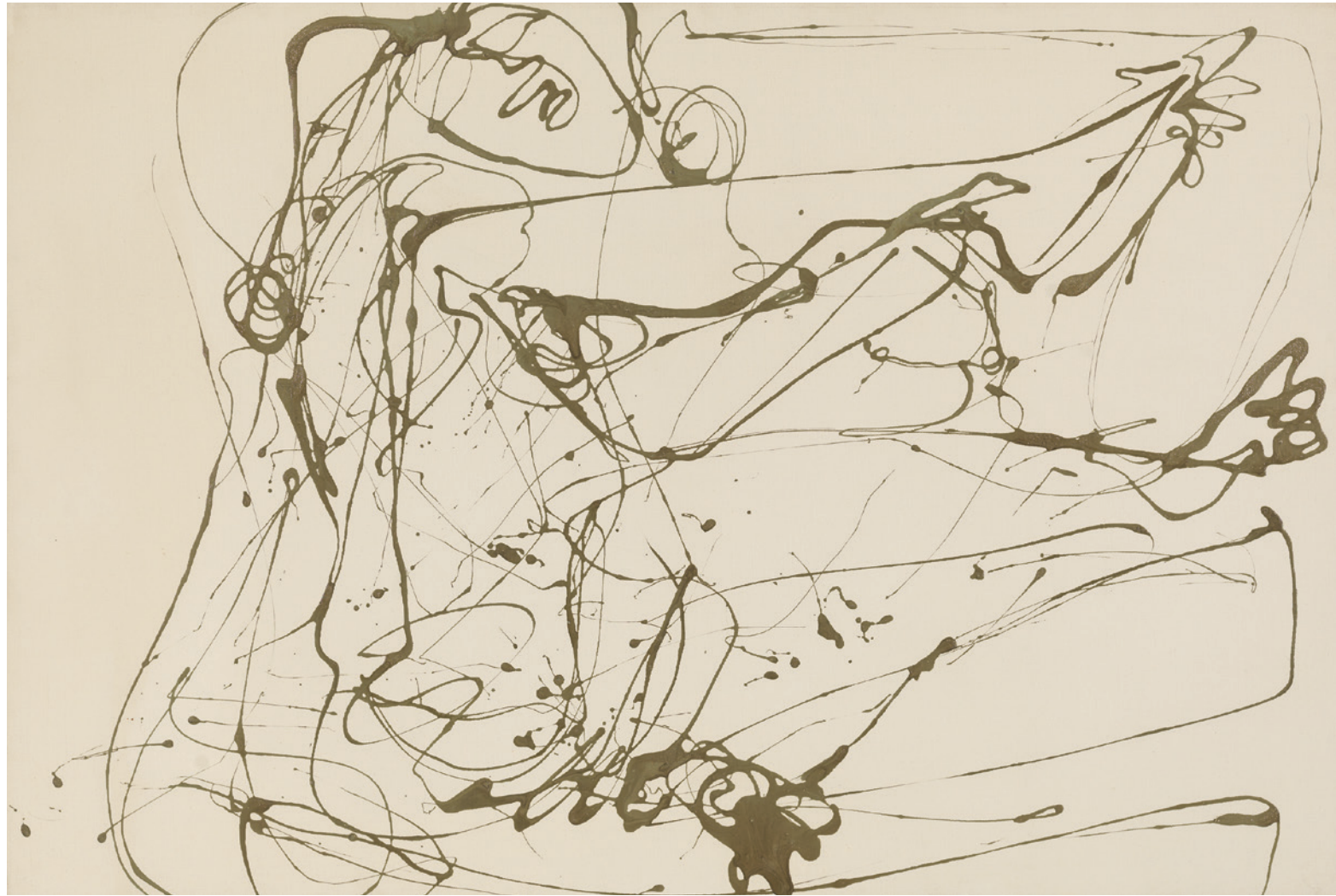
38 Tadashi Sato
Falling Leaf, 1966

RIGHT

39 Tadashi Sato
Surf and Water Reflections, 1969–70







LEFT

40 David Smith
Untitled (*Green Linear Nude*), c. 1964

94



RIGHT

41 Clyfford Still
PH-233 [formerly *Self-Portrait*], 1945

95



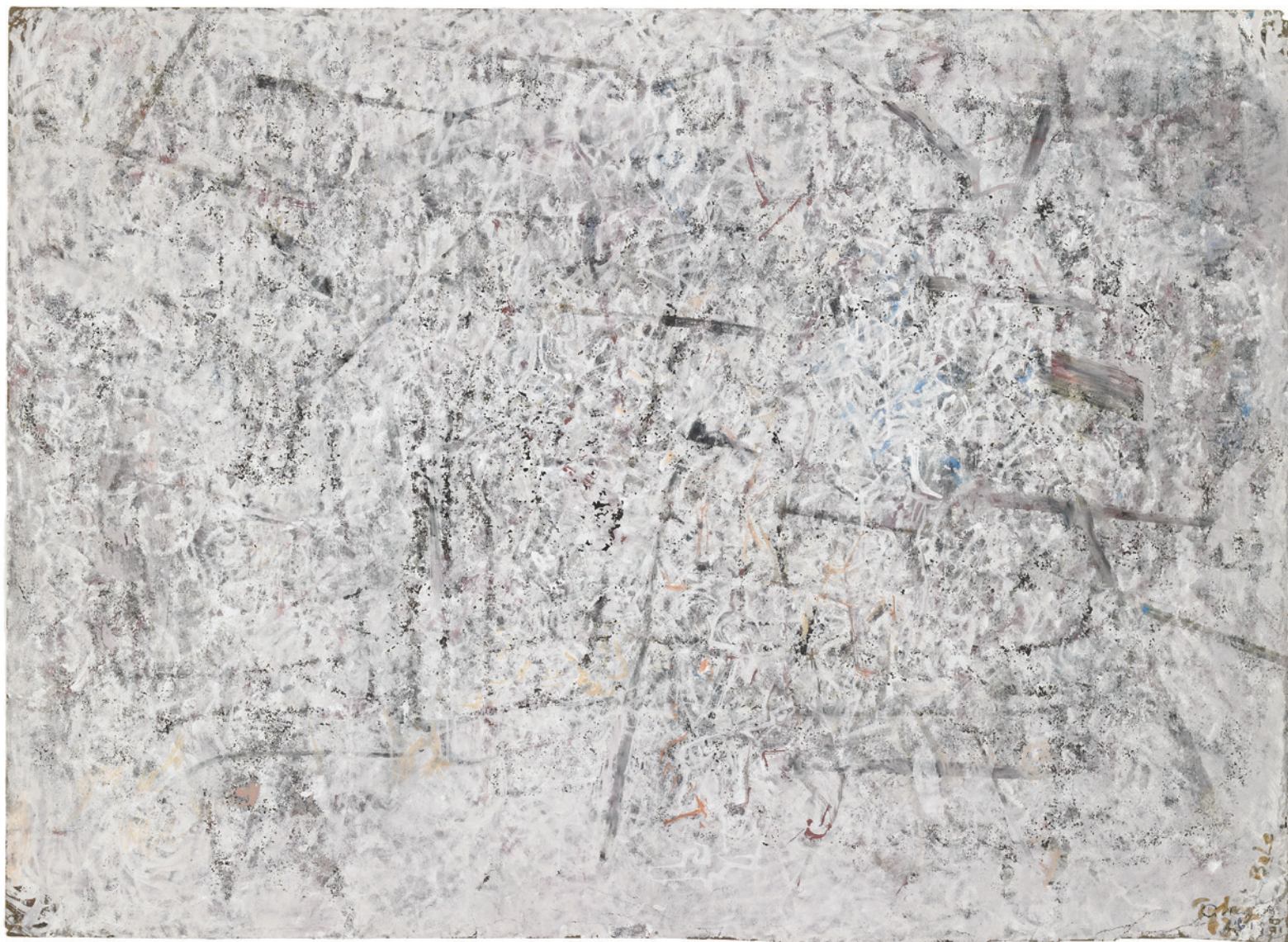
LEFT

42 Toshiko Takaezu
Moon, c. 1980s

RIGHT

43 Reuben Tam
The Weathering of Kauai, 1964





LEFT

44 Mark Tobey
Fogged Perspective, 1961



RIGHT

45 Mark Tobey
Little Wall, 1960



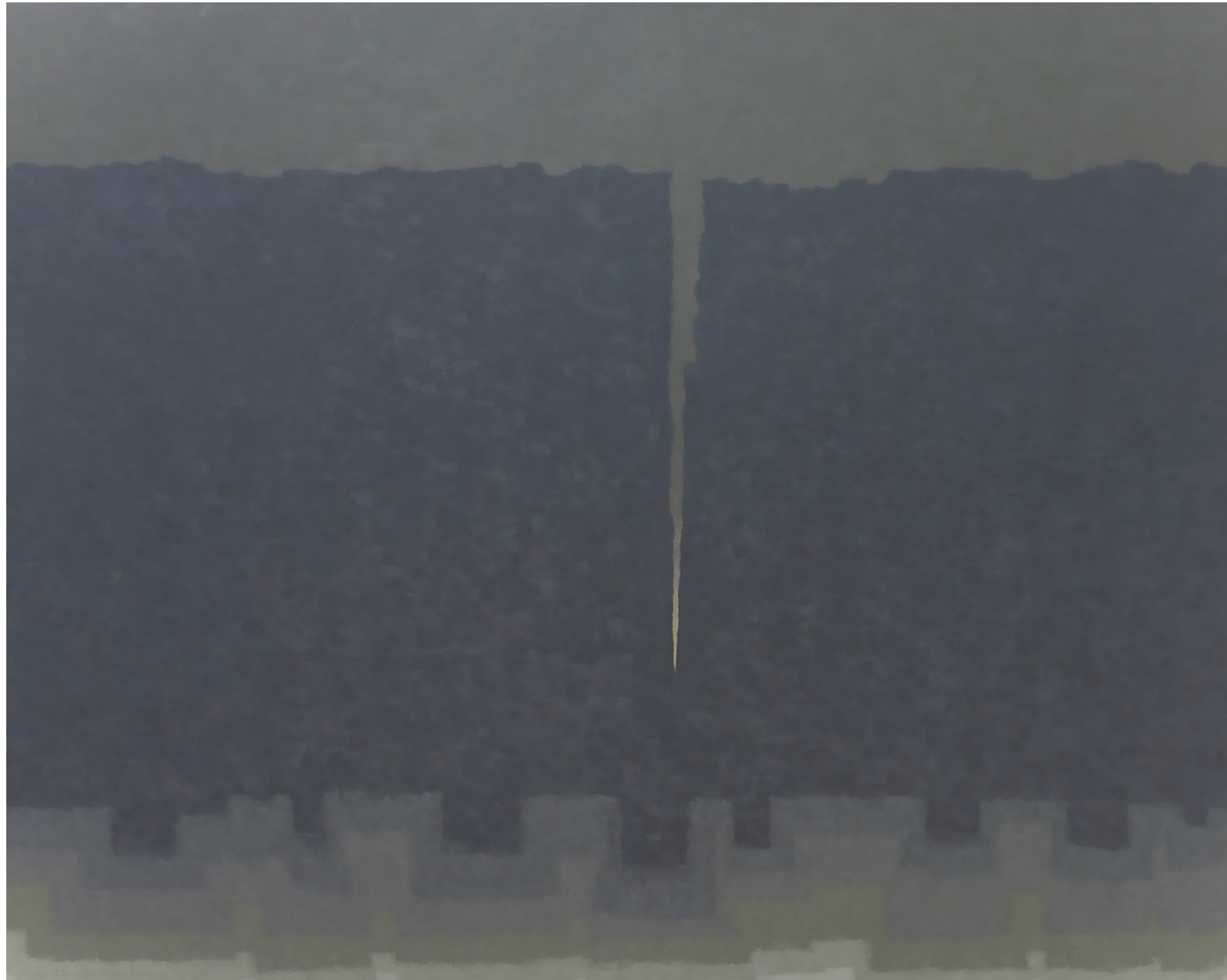
LEFT

46 Mark Tobey
Untitled, 1954

RIGHT

47 Tseng Yu-ho (Betty Ecke)
Seagulls, 1965





LEFT

48 Harry Tsuchidana
Break in the Wall, 1966

RIGHT

49 George Tsutakawa
Obos No. 15, 1961



Catalogue of the Exhibition

Satoru Abe American, born 1926

The Idol, 1958

Welded copper and bronze
62 3/4 × 17 × 7 inches
Honolulu Museum of Art
Gift of the Hawaii
Community Foundation,
Keiji Kawakami Art
Foundation Fund, 1992
(6902.1)
p. vii (detail), 48 (detail), 49

Bumpei Akaji American, 1921–2002

And she was beautiful too,
1957

Oil on canvas
49 × 49 inches
Collection of Nancy and
Herb Conley
p. 50

Untitled, 1980

Copper and brass
33 1/2 × 21 × 15 inches
Honolulu Museum of Art
Gift of The Contemporary
Museum, Honolulu, 2011,
and gift of the artist, 1981
(TCM.1981.1.988)
p. 51, 52 (detail)

Ruth Asawa American, 1926–2013

Untitled
(*S.540, Hanging*,
Seven-Lobed,
Interlocking
Continuous Form
within a Form), c. 1958

Brass and copper wire
69 1/2 × 15 × 15 inches
The Shidler Family
Collection
p. v, 27 (detail), 53

Willem de Kooning American, 1904–1997

Nathan Oliveira, printer American, 1928–2010

George Miyasaki, printer American, 1935–2013

Litho #1 (Waves #1),
1960

Lithograph
45 19/16 × 31 3/4 inches
Fine Arts Museums of
San Francisco, Museum
purchase, Phyllis C. Wattis
Fund for Major Accessions
2011.12
p. 54

(artist continued)

Litho #2 (Waves #2),
1960

Lithograph
47 19/16 × 32 9/16 inches
The Cleveland Museum of
Art, Leonard C. Hanna, Jr.
Fund 1997.55
p. 55

Willem de Kooning American, 1904–1997

Woman as Landscape,
1954–5

Oil on canvas
65 1/4 × 48 3/4 inches
Collection of
Barney Ebsworth
p. 56

Isami Doi American, 1903–1965

Ascetic, 1959

Oil on canvas
50 × 54 inches
Honolulu Museum of Art
Gift of Friends of Edgar C.
Schenck, 1960 (2678.1)
p. 18 (detail), 57

(artist continued)

My Mystic Pilgrimage

Oil on canvas
50 × 60 inches
Collection of Nancy and
Herb Conley
pp. 12–13 (detail), 58

Sam Francis American, 1923–1994

Black and Red, 1950–3

Oil on canvas
77 × 38 1/4 inches
Honolulu Museum of Art
Gift of The Contemporary
Museum, Honolulu,
2011, and bequest of
Mary Elizabeth Sterling
(TCM.2007.1.3)
p. 59

Adolph Gottlieb American, 1903–1974

Edge, 1972

Oil on canvas
60 × 48 inches
University of Iowa
Museum of Art
Gift of Mrs. Adolph
Gottlieb, 1974.183
p. 60

Philip Guston American, born Canada, 1913–1980

Ceremony, 1957

Oil on board
36 1/2 × 25 7/16 × 1 1/4 inches
Honolulu Museum of Art
Gift of Mr. and Mrs.
Stanley N. Barbee, 1965
(3430.1)
p. 61

Untitled, 1963

Ink on paper
18 × 24 inches
The Modern Art Museum
of Fort Worth,
Gift of Musa and Tom Mayer
(1999.9)
p. 62

Saburo Hasegawa Japanese, 1906–1957

Abstract Calligraphy,
c. 1955–7

Ink on paper
51 1/4 × 22 3/4 inches
San Francisco Museum
of Modern Art
Gift of Joseph Brotherton
(57.4407)
p. 63

Paul Horiuchi American, 1906–1999

Abstract Screen, 1961

Paper collage with gouache
on six-panel screen
52 3/4 × 108 inches
Collection of Nathaniel
and Fay Hauberg Page
p. 64

Awareness of Time,
1964

Collage on canvas
55 × 44 inches
Collection of
John E. Braseth
p. 65

Ralph Iwamoto American, 1927–2013

Winter Mist, 1958

Oil on canvas
52 × 72 inches
Collection of Nancy and
Herb Conley
p. vi (detail), 66, 67 (detail)

Keichi Kimura American, 1914–1988

Phoenix, 1972

Oil on canvas
49 3/4 × 49 3/4 inches
Honolulu Museum of Art
Gift of Juli Kimura Walters,
2001 (11779.1)
p. i (detail), 68 (detail), 69,
112 (detail)

Untitled

Oil on canvas
36 × 40 inches
Collection of Nancy and
Herb Conley
p. 70

Sueko Kimura American, 1912–2001

Lost Garden, 1964

Oil on canvas
28 × 40 inches
Honolulu Museum of Art
Gift of Juli Kimura Walters,
2001 (11778.1)
p. 71

Franz Kline American, 1910–1962

Corinthian II, 1961

Oil on canvas
79 5/8 × 107 1/4 inches
The Museum of Fine Arts,
Houston, Bequest of Caroline
Wiess Law (2004.26)
p. 72

George Miyasaki American, 1935–2013

Green Landscape, 1957

Oil on canvas
36 1/2 × 46 5/8 inches
Honolulu Museum of Art
Gift of Julie Miyasaki, 2014
(2014-83-02)
p. 73

Morita Shiryū Japanese, 1912–1998

Dragon Knows Dragon
(*Ryū wa ryū o shiru*),
1964

Aluminum flake pigment
in PVA glue medium,
lacquer on paper, four-
panel folding screen
87 19/16 × 44 1/8 inches
Collection of
Shibunkaku Co., Ltd.
pp. 32–33, 74

Robert Motherwell
American, 1915–1991

Untitled, 1963

Oil on canvas
88 × 67 inches
Honolulu Museum of Art
Gift of The Contemporary
Museum, Honolulu, 2011,
and purchased with funds
given by Persis Corporation
and gift of the Dedalus
Foundation (TCM.1997.1)
p. 75

Barnett Newman
American, 1905–1970

Untitled Etching 1
(First Version), 1968

Etching
Plate: 14 ¾ × 23 ⅞ inches
Sheet: 19 × 29 ½ inches
Private collection, courtesy
of Craig F. Starr Gallery
p. 76

Isamu Noguchi
American, 1904–1988

Red Untitled, 1965–6

Red Persian travertine
64 ½ × 23 ⅞ × 22 ¾ inches
Honolulu Museum of Art
Gift of Geraldine P. Clark,
1977 (4502.1)
p. 77

Victim, 1962, cast 1984

Bronze, black patina
60 ½ × 28 ¼ × 62 ½ inches
Element (A):
62 ½ × 17 × 17 inches
Element (B):
62 ⅞ × 40 ¼ × 8 inches
The Isamu Noguchi Foun-
dation and Garden Museum,
New York CR# 533B-3/6
p. 78

Tetsuo Ochikubo
American, 1923–1975

All Things Exist,
c. 1960–70

Oil on canvas
54 × 31 inches
Honolulu Museum of Art
Bequest of Patches Damon
Holt, 2003 (12682.1)
cover (detail), 79, 111 (detail)

Untitled

Oil on canvas
60 × 40 inches
Collection of Nancy and
Herb Conley
p. 80

Kenzo Okada
American, born Japan,
1902–1982

Turn, 1962

Oil on canvas
60 × 51 inches
Honolulu Museum of Art
Purchase, 1966 (3400.1)
p. 81

Jerry Okimoto
American, 1924–1998

Untitled

Oil on canvas
40 ¼ × 51 ¼ inches
Courtesy of the Art in
Public Places Collection
Hawai'i State Foundation
on Culture and the Arts
(3999)
p. 82

Jackson Pollock
American, 1912–1956

Portrait of H. M., 1945

Oil on canvas
36 × 43 inches
University of Iowa
Museum of Art
Gift of Peggy Guggenheim,
1947.39
p. 83

Richard Pousette-Dart
American, 1916–1992

Savage Rose, 1951

Oil on canvas
79 × 54 ¼ inches
Honolulu Museum of Art
Gift of Mr. and Mrs.
Frederick R. Weisman in
honor of James W. Foster,
1971 (7990.1)
pp. ii–iii (detail), 84,
85 (detail)

Ad Reinhardt
American, 1913–1967

Ten Screenprints, 1966

Screenprints
Dimensions vary
Honolulu Museum of Art
Gift of Mr. and Mrs.
Frederick R. Weisman in
honor of James W. Foster,
1971 (15726–15735)
p. 86, 87

Mark Rothko
American, 1903–1970

Untitled, 1968

Acrylic on paper mounted
on Masonite
39 ¼ × 25 ⅞ inches
University of Iowa
Museum of Art
Gift of the Mark Rothko
Foundation, Inc., 1985.49
p. 88

Tadashi Sato
American, 1923–2005

Composition with Red,
1958

Oil on canvas
42 × 50 inches
Collection of Nancy and
Herb Conley
p. 89

Falling Leaf, 1966

Oil on linen
88 × 40 inches
Honolulu Museum of Art
Gift of The Contemporary
Museum, Honolulu, 2011,
and gift of Grant R. Jones,
2003 (TCM.2003.24)
p. 11 (detail), 90, 92 (detail)

Surf and Water
Reflections, 1969–70

Oil on canvas
84 × 64 inches
Honolulu Museum of Art
Gift of The Contemporary
Museum, Honolulu, 2011,
and gift of the Honolulu
Advertiser Collection at
Persis Corporation, 1974
(TCM.1974.1.239)
p. 91, 93 (detail)

David Smith
American, 1906–1965

Untitled
(Green Linear Nude),
c. 1964

Enamel paint on canvas
30 × 44 ½ inches
Honolulu Museum of Art
Gift of The Contemporary
Museum, Honolulu, 2011,
and bequest of Mary
Elizabeth Sterling, 2007
(TCM.2007.1.5)
p. 94

Clyfford Still
American, 1904–1980

PH-233 [formerly
Self-Portrait], 1945

Oil on canvas
70 ⅞ × 42 inches
San Francisco Museum
of Modern Art
Gift of Peggy Guggenheim
(47.1238)
p. 95

Toshiko Takaezu
American, 1922–2011

Moon, c. 1980s

Glazed stoneware
29 × 29 × 29 inches
Honolulu Museum of Art
Gift of The Contemporary
Museum, Honolulu, 2011
and gift of the artist
(TCM.2007.5.23)
p. 96

Reuben Tam
American, 1916–1991

The Weathering
of Kauai, 1964

Oil on canvas
48 × 54 inches
Scudder Gillmar Trust
p. 24 (detail), 97

Mark Tobey
American, 1890–1976

Fogged Perspective,
1961

Tempera on paper
10 ¼ × 15 ⅞ inches
Honolulu Museum of Art
Purchase, 1965 (3372.1)
p. 98

Little Wall, 1960

Gouache on paper
6 ½ × 6 inches
Honolulu Museum of Art
Gift of The Contemporary
Museum, Honolulu, 2011,
and gift of Mr. and Mrs.
Edward H. Nakamura
(TCM.1991.15)
p. 99

Untitled, 1954

Tempera on paper
18 ⅞ × 13 ⅞ inches
Honolulu Museum of Art
Gift of R.R. Heyum Trust,
1995 (25753)
p. 100

Tseng Yu-ho (Betty Ecke)
American, born China,
1924

Seagulls, 1965

Paper collage
72 × 36 ½ inches
Honolulu Museum of Art
Gift from the artist's chil-
dren, in memory of Marie
Sara Garvey Thomson, 1992
(7049.1)
p. 101

Harry Tsuchidana
American, born 1932

Break in the Wall, 1966

Oil on canvas
40 ⅞ × 50 ¾ inches
Courtesy of the Art in
Public Places Collection
Hawai'i State Foundation
on Culture and the Arts
(0260)
p. 102

George Tsutakawa
American, 1910–1997

Obos No. 15, 1961

Cedar
30 ½ × 26 × 18 inches
Estate of George Tsutakawa
p. 103

Lenders to the Exhibition

Art in Public Places Collection,
Hawai'i State Foundation on
Culture and the Arts

John E. Braseth

The Cleveland Museum of Art

Nancy and Herb Conley

Barney Ebsworth

Fine Arts Museums
of San Francisco

The Isamu Noguchi Foundation
and Garden Museum, New York

Modern Art Museum
of Fort Worth

The Museum of Fine Arts,
Houston

Nathaniel and Fay
Hauberg Page

San Francisco Museum
of Modern Art

Scudder Gillmar Trust

Shibunkaku Co., Ltd.

The Shidler Family

Craig F. Starr Gallery

Estate of George Tsutakawa

University of Iowa Museum
of Art

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