

TADAAKI KUWAYAMA

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Beautiful Nothing

The Work of Tadaaki Kuwayama

by Aaron Betsky

Nothing has plagued the arts for centuries.¹ What not to do, how not to represent, what is the art that can escape from the system within it produces, and how to reach the pure state of nirvana, of zen, of enlightenment, or of art itself –these have been issues central to the work of any artist wishing to establishing a critical practice that goes beyond communication their experience of reality. The reasons for this concern range from the philosophical (how to achieve to make the spirit, the holy, or the other present in art)² to the practical (how to avoid having the work of art become a consumable, and thus the artist a worker whose efforts are alienated).³ They are also profoundly aesthetic, as many artists believe that only by not only not representing, but by not making at all, can they produce an art that would be truly autonomous and beautiful in and of itself. Few artists have spent longer and worked harder to achieve nothing in the last fifty years than Tadaaki Kuwayama.

What is ironic –or appropriate, if you follow the logic of the minimalists who are on this quest for nothing, is that what actually appears in the best work that approaches nothing –and this is certainly the case with Kuwayama’s production—is work whose intensity and effect on the viewer is all the greater because of its lack of most what we expect to see in art. Without representation, hierarchy, or materiality, Kuwayama’s paintings and objects become pure color, form, and presence in space. They are luscious and deep in their hues and complete as things exactly because of their lack of reference, but they are also not focal or fetish points. This is exactly what Kuwayama desires to achieve.⁴ He believes that a space appears, a void or nothing that is the art he is making, exactly out of the relationship between the work he has so diligently denuded of any marks of making or art practice in the traditional sense.

Kuwayama embarked on his quest for this space at a moment of minimalism that had arisen in reaction to both previous attempts to find such a nothing and to a previous era in which it was the fulness of art, which is to say its abundance of meaning, gesture, layering, and materiality, that artists felt would allow it to conquer attempts to consume it too easily. He came to that time and place – New York in the late 1950s—with his own history, one that had taught him how to make art that was expressive and referential without being directly representational. Though Kuwayama rejected his training, coming to the United States exactly because he felt restricted by its traditions, the lessons he had learned in the *nihonga* school⁵ he attended in the end gave him the discipline, as well as the awareness of the artist as an active composer and maker, that let him work through his rejection of the known with success.

The line of minimalism he entered in New York reached back to the second decade of the 20th century. Although artists had sought to empty and refine their work before this, it was not until Kazimir Malevich and El Lissitzky and Piet Mondrian and Theo van Doesburg, to name some of the most obvious progenitors of such a work, rejected direct representation with clarity and resolution, that minimalism appeared.⁶ These artists also can stand for the traditional two impulses leading to nothing. While Malevich, for instance, saw his work as a revolution in practice and politics that was at least partially scientific, and which he related to the fundamental explosion of reality through the emergence of quantum physics and other such developments,⁷ Mondrian was driven by a belief in a spirit or oneness of the universe that could only descend on our world through a process of denial.⁸

None of these artists or their compatriots ultimately held fast to this notion of making nothing. Their work still had a clear materiality and complex composition, even in Malevich’s twin *White on White* of 1918 and *Black Square* of 1915. Such a remainder became a recurring issue with minimalist art: artists always stepped back from the brink of whatever form of pure nothing they approached. This is perhaps not surprising. It is difficult for an artist to fully embrace doing nothing, and to deny their own authorship. It is a form of suicide, and it is perhaps not surprising that those artists who came closest to their goal –Ad Reinhardt and Mark Rothko come to mind—did so at the end of their life and in paintings whose blackness evokes an absence that is fully funereal.

The particular minimalist movement of which Kuwayama became, together with Donald Judd, Carl Andre, Anne Truitt, Robert Morris, Mark DiSuvero, and (somewhat later) Sol LeWitt, a founding member, was, even from the beginning, more expressive than many of its predecessors. It was a clear reaction to the macho primitivism and primal instincts of the Abstract Expressionists, but it also sought to offer an alternative to the emergence of a consumer culture that threatened to drown both the public and artists with a surfeit of meaning, materials, and just plain stuff. The minimalism of the early 1960s also evoked, certainly in relation to the writing of certain critics and to the work of movie makers such as Alain Resnais, a sense of the existential meaningless of such a culture, especially as the threat of instant annihilation through the atomic bomb was a constant presence. Instead of the positive motivation of building a new, communal and communist reality, or working towards pure and final enlightenment, this was a minimalism of anger, rejection, and denial.⁹

Ironically, as James Meyer has pointed out, the particular movement that emerged with shows at the Green Gallery in 1963 and then the validating exhibitions of *Primary Structures*, at the Jewish Museum, and *Systematic Painting* at the Guggenheim in 1966, were as much part of a broader movements in political activism and consumer culture as they were a reaction against trends in the art world.¹⁰ The turn towards minimalism in couture and music marked the realization by a certain segment of the social and economic elite that the way in which they could set themselves apart was by joining artists in the rejection of popular culture whose mass production and elicitation of quick and emotional responses was seen as the antithesis of what those who truly understood current and future conditions thought was an appropriate art.

What marked Kuwayama apart from this movement was both the distance he kept from such debates, using his lack of fluency in English as a kind of buffer from the most intense debates and the selling of the work that soon became central to its production itself. Beyond that distance, however, what really marked his work was that he kept going. Though fissures soon appeared in the minimalist movement of the early 1960s, those divisions had to do with modes of expression and materiality: Morris’ expressive sculptures versus Truitt’s pure forms, for instance.¹¹ Kuwayama was always the most radical of the group and, when his friends and associates started developing other means to reject or challenge consumerism, he went in a different direction. He tried to find a way to be even more minimal.

The means he chose, however, were an adaptation of technologies that had been developed exactly for the production of large-run and high-affect objects. The first of these was spray paint. A technique that came out of the need for even and large surfaces for industrial and mass production purposes, it was soon adapted by artists involved in more popular forms of work, such as auto detailers and hot rodders (most famously Big Daddy Roth) and those doing illustrations for magazines architectural renderings.¹² Later, it became the mainstay of the graffiti art movement. For Kuwayama, it was the first time he used material that thus resolutely did not come out of the high art tradition. He relished the absoluteness of its finish, produced not by stroke, but by the settling of an even mist on the canvas. Layering the colors in the manner in which he had his water-based paints, he was able to achieve the same depth and evenness of color, but without any mark whatsoever of the artist's hand.

Not somebody to believe in a single-line progression, however, Kuwayama did not merely give up working with paints. He merely added spray paint to his arsenal. The same was true of the three-dimensional pieces with which he started experimenting shortly thereafter. It was here that he first used metal, and it was clear that the integrally colored, machined, and shiny surfaces he was able to achieve using this synthetic material allowed him to approach even closer to the notion of a neutral, high effect but low affect, material. Like a smith testing material at the point of state change to achieve the maximum strength of flexibility of metal result, Kuwayama pushed his bronze and aluminum to be as abstract as his layered paintings, but without their containment on the wall.

He also broke through the limitations of the single canvas by working in series. He had already divided his paintings into separate areas, often squares separated by the thinnest possible aluminum strip, so that they became both objects in themselves and compositions of several, completely equal elements whose uniqueness was in question by their simultaneous presence. Now he began to create works that were either completely the same in series, first of only two or three, but eventually in high numbers, or that exhibited slight differences in tonality. The difference of under painting that shown through in certain lighting conditions, or depending on how you moved past the painting, made the viewer an active participant in the work of art. You could no longer just contemplate the painting and thus have it remain a static, fetishized object. You had to move around, creating both space and time in the work of art.

Over time, some of these works became quite heroic in their ambitions, with one series of vertical members expanding to be well over fifty pieces. Once such multiples reached the scale that they began to extend beyond even your peripheral vision, or to even surround you, they took a new dimension. Kuwayama prefers the tall vertical pieces, for instance, to be installed in an L- or U-shape around you, so that the series overcomes any limitations of a single wall and forces you to abandon a purely frontal relation with any one of the pieces. While you at first might have a tendency to look for discrepancies or differences between the different members of the series, soon you find yourself realizing that the difference in shading and reflectivity that occur along their surfaces the artist has worked so hard to perfect are something that is the result of your different relationship to them as you move through the space. The retinal recall you experience then creates a barely perceptible cloud of color that hovers in space, only to dissipate any time you try to catch its existence.

In this, these sculptural works, as well as the lighter of Kuwayama's single pieces, share a certain affinity (which he acknowledges) to the art produces to the "light and space artists" of Southern California.¹³ Whereas artists such as James Turrell, Robert Irwin, or Larry Bell sought to dematerialize the work so as to force you to become aware of your own perceptions (or so their most popular interpreter, Lawrence Wechsler, claimed¹⁴), Kuwayama wants the cloud to evaporate, forcing you not to come to terms with either yourself or the works, but the absence of effect—or at least your very inability to define it as such.

Unlike other pursuers of minimalism, moreover, Kuwayama has resolutely eschewed any tendency towards monumentality. When given the ability to install his pieces in site-specific ways in galleries that gave him the freedom to manipulate their spaces, he chose to let the existing conditions continue to exist and dominate, allowing his art to work its seeming magic through perfection, repetition, and lack of affect.¹⁵ He did not seek to overwhelm you, nor did he pursue the revelation (in the manner of Donald Judd or Richard Serra) of forces larger than you—although he admits that he would be happy to have his pieces exist in a post-human condition—but rather emphasized their presence in relationship to each other and you. Unlike Sol LeWitt, moreover, the series or the geometry never became either the point or the remainder of the work.¹⁶ For Kuwayama, who also made delicate pieces out of paper that remain in dialogue with the work of his fellow artist and wife, Rakuko Naito, each piece retained an individual presence and sense that it was an autonomous work that, paradoxically, existed through its effect on you.

As Kuwayama has experimented with various techniques and processes, as well as formats, he has found one mode of making that is as close to not-making as he has come. Working with a factory in Japan, he supervises the process of the electrolysis of titanium by which it gains a particular color. His work consists of sitting with the operator and deciding the exact moment he wants the transformation to end, so that one particular hue emerges. Because the color is integral, but also because of the particular qualities of titanium (which architects such as Frank Gehry have also come to appreciate) he is able to achieve a particular iridescence that is all the more remarkable because of the solidity of the material. Cutting the metal into small blocks, he then arrays the pieces in precise grids on the wall, in pairs of closely matched color. Now even the slightest movement of the eye, let alone the head, or a change in the atmosphere of the room, causes the objects to change their aspect. Perhaps ironically, because of the minimalism of the production, these titanium pieces are about as baroque and luscious as Kuwayama has allowed his work to become.

It is in this manner that Kuwayama has perhaps comes closest to nothing. As he often points out, he sees his art as existing in thin air, as a kind of relational aura between the viewer, the work, and the space in which it occurs. The aim he pursues is to not so much make this aura, as to allow it to appear. To make things even more complicated, or closer to nothing, Kuwayama also believes that this particular nothing is both beautiful and valuable, and independent of perception or human beings. Out of the choices the artist makes, but perhaps also out of chance, and certainly out of taste and aesthetic enjoyment, that nothing just somehow, in the end, is.

To see this work, which dates from the last few years, as the endpoint or latest evolution of the artist's body of work, however, is wrong. Kuwayama has refused to see his work as consisting of an evolution towards to any form or goal or ideal, even if that final end point would be pureness of nothing or the nothingness of purity. Instead, he keeps returning to previous modes of working, as well as rearranging existing pieces. To discard any previous work or give favor to the latest production (though he admits to a fondness, which is common to any creator, for what he has done last), after all, would mean that there is an intrinsic value to the craft of the making, its presentation, or the artist's other choices in the art making.

Instead, Kuwayama just keeps making. He has an obvious passion for his work, as well as a sense of aesthetics, particular of color and composition, that comes through exactly in the choices he continues to make. He also admits to destroying work that he feels does not live up to his standards. Furthermore, he remains fully committed to playing out all the possibilities of limited formats he has by now established, rather than broadening his body of work to include other media or techniques. However open to new technologies he might be, they must continue his experiments. All this would indicate that he sees value in each work that he makes, and that he uses standards of judgement that define him as the discriminating and privileged creator. Perhaps his most finely-honed art, then, lies in convincing us that all this is as if nothing, and that nothing comes out of it in such a way that it fills our eyes and our spirit with something that, in the end, we still might call art.

Aaron Betsky

Endnotes

- 1 The problem of nothing goes back, at least in the West, to the simultaneous emergences of the zero in algebra, one-point perspective, and the philosophical notion of nothingness or absence (see Brian Rotman, *Signifying Nothing: The Semiotics of Zero* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1991). Its development in Hegelian and Heideggerian thought as a positive “absence” stands in contrast to the lack created by alienation in Marxist thought. Perhaps the fullest philosophical description of the problem, however, is still Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*, with its description of the spiral of alienation that is the very foundation of humanity (transl. by Hazel E. Barnes, New York: Philosophical Library, 1956, esp. pp. 21-46 and pp. 617ff.
- 2 For the (mis)interpretation of Zen thought in contemporary art, see; Gregory P.A. Levine, *Long Strange Journey: On Modern Zen, Zen Art, and Other Predicaments* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2017).
- 3 Such theories are usually associated with Marxism and, in art, with the Postwar work Clement Greenberg. See his *Art and Culture* (New York: Beacon Press, 1961xa).
- 4 All artist’s comments: conversation with the author, March 15, 2019
- 5 For an English-language history of the school, see Ellen P. Conant et.al., *Nihonga: Transcending the Past* (London: Weatherhill Press, 1996).
- 6 Generally, “minimalism” did emerge as a term for such reductive art until the 1960s. The term “non-objective” and “abstract” art (coined by the Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky) were used starting in the 1920s and 1930s to describe the general refusal at figuration. It is only in retrospect that we can understand the continuity of this tradition. See Edward Strickland, *Minimalism: Origins* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) and
- 7 Malevich actually coined the term “non-objective art” and popularized it in the West in his 1927 *The Non-Objective World: Manifesto of Suprematism* (New York: Dover Publications, 2003).
- 8 Piet Mondrian, “Neoplasticism in Painting,” in: *De Stijl*, Vol. 1, No. 12, pp. 140-147, 1925, transl. by Hans L.C. Jaffe in *De Stijl* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1971).
- 9 See Dore Ashton, *The New York School: A Cultural Reckoning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
- 10 James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 24ff.

- 11 Ibid, pp. 47-56. Although he never reviewed Kuwayama’s work, Michael Fried provided the best ongoing evaluation of the movement in his essays. See Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
- 12 Hilary Greenbaum, Dana Rubinstein, “The Origin of Spray Paint,” *The New York Times*, November 4, 2011, p. M22.
- 13 For the best compendium and analysis of the movement, see the catalog of the exhibition organized as part of the first Pacific Standard Time series: Robin Clark, ed., *Phenomenal: California Light, Space, Surface* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).
- 14 Lawrence Wechsler, *Seeing is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees: A Life of Contemporary Artist Robert Irwin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).
- 15 In fact, he feels strongly that both Serra’s heaviness and the attempts to create an “almost nothing” by groups such as Zero failed exactly because of their monumentality. Cf. Joseph D. Ketner, *Witness to Phenomenon: Group Zero and the Development of New Media in Postwar European Art* (London: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2017).
- 16 For the best discussion of the devolution of minimalism into conceptual work, see Lucy Lippard, *Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).



Tadaaki Kuwayama in his studio 1960

Life in New York as an Artist: Harmony of Art, People, and Space

Tadaaki Kuwayama and Architect Kengo Kuma in Conversation

THE ART SCENE IN NEW YORK: CHOOSING NEW YORK INSTEAD OF PARIS

Kuma

I've heard that your work is currently in a Minimalist exhibition at the Singapore National Museum and that your solo exhibition will be held in Taiwan next month. I am glad to have the opportunity to meet with you in Japan during this busy period in Asia for you. It is our first time to meet each other.

Kuwayama

I spend most of my time in New York, coming back to Japan only for exhibitions.

Kuma

When did you move to New York?

Kuwayama

In 1958.

Kuma

More than 60 years ago. What motivated you to go to New York?

Kuwayama

I was studying painting at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music and I hated the Japanese system there. For example, for the nihonga (Japanese traditional painting) section, everyone had to act together as a group under a director. This happened in the other departments as well. For me, art was more personal and I needed to be creative. Two years after graduating, I went to New York.

Kuma

In Japan, even leading artists have little freedom.

Kuwayama

That's right.

Kuma

Of all the cities in the world, what was it about New York that attracted you?

Kuwayama

When I decided to go to the United States, I had an interview at the American Consulate. It was required at that time. Also, airplane travel was only allowed for politicians. We had to go by boat.

Kuma

Right, travel was by boat at that time.

Kuwayama

That’s what they told me at the Consulate.

Why did I choose New York?

It might have been better to go to Paris, but my thinking was that art could only move forward with financial support. America had won the war and was the richest nation on earth at the time. The only place that interested me in the United States was New York. Looking back, I really thought America was the place for me. It was the center of the post-war world, and action painting and the like were concentrated in New York in 1958.

The Consulate was not aware of that, and most of my contemporaries were still looking to Europe.

Kuma

There was not much information about the United States at that time. It was good foresight on your part.

Kuwayama

I was surprised at first by action painting when I arrived in New York. Actually, action painting was beginning to wind down and it was time for a new movement to appear. Minimalism, and a bit later, Pop Art. The works in New York were larger in scale than anything I had ever seen before. It was amazing to me. As it was already happening, though, it was not for me. That was at the end of the 1950s, beginning of the

1960s. Thinking about it, my timing was good. It was a turning point in the art scene.

Kuma

In architecture, too, everything in Japan was oriented towards groups. I was suffocating. That’s why I went to New York in 1985. It was a kind of ‘in-between’ time for architecture. Post-Modernism was in its last stages and everyone was wondering what to do next. 1985 was actually really a good time in that sense. Was that your experience as well?

Kuwayama

Yes, 1985 was a good time. There were many new galleries and young curators starting to be active at MoMA, the Guggenheim, and the Metropolitan - William Sites, Henry Geldzahler. They would go around on Mondays, when the museums were closed, searching for new talent. The director of the Leo Castelli Gallery told me that, and he said he would bring them to my studio. I thought it was a joke but he really did bring them and that’s how I got picked up. I don’t know if it was because of the timing, or because the next generation of artists had not yet emerged.

Kuma

In 1985, I was also set on New York (laughs). I went with an Rockefeller American Cultural Council grant. Until then, no architect had received the ACC grant. The artist Tadashi Kawamata had been awarded the year before me, and Kenjiro Okazaki a year later. There was a similar consciousness, thinking of connections between art and

architecture, space and architecture. I felt really changed in New York.

I was registered at Columbia University as a visiting researcher. Basically, I just used the library.

Kuwayama

We also had to be registered as students.

Kuma

Where were you affiliated?

Kuwayama

Most of the artists were connected with the Art Students League. Anyone can be admitted, but you have to sign in for attendance every day for immigration. So it was not much use as a school. We would just sign in and go home.

Kuma

That’s funny. However, maybe the curators you mentioned might have frequented the school....

GREEN GALLERY

Kuwayama

Have you heard of the Green Gallery? I hadn’t, but the owner asked me to take a look. He was young, maybe three or four years older than me. Henry Geldzahler and others often visited his gallery. When I went, there was an open-plan Mark di Suvero exhibition going on. After looking around, I said ‘goodbye.’ The owner took

that to mean I had no interest. My English wasn’t very good and I was simply saying ‘goodbye.’ Then Leo Castelli got in touch with me. He started out with “Don’t jump to ‘no.’ I’d like to organize an exhibition of your work.”

Kuma

So, did you have an exhibition at Leo Castelli Gallery?

Kuwayama

I had a solo exhibition there in 1966. I’ve been working with them ever since.

Kuma

You were very fortunate to have the opportunity to present your work like that just two years after arriving in New York.

Kuwayama

Yes, of course. Luckily, they approached me and wanted my work.

Kuma

What kind of artists did Green Gallery represent at the time?

Kuwayama

George Segal, Dan Flavin, Lucas Samaras, and then Tom Wesselmann and Pop Artists. It was much later, but Kusama Yayoi took part in a group show there as well.

Kuma
Green Gallery was a respected gallery at the time. You were lucky to start out that way and to continue selling your works.

Kuwayama
Well, the works sold for only around 100 to 200 dollars.

Kuma
Still, it is amazing that you were able to do that, to be able to support yourself in New York. I heard stories about difficulties of surviving in New York from Tadashi Kawamata and Kenjiro Okazaki.

Kuwayama
The work we were doing in the 1960s was not understood generally by local Americans. Most of my support came from Switzerland and German.

Kuma
Really?

Kuwayama
Yes. I would not have been able to manage only on American support. In terms of museums and galleries, most of my support was in Europe. My first museum show was at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam for the Color of Shape exhibition. I was entered as an American. That was in 1966. But I did not have any solo shows at the time and was in bad shape financially. My first solo show was at the

Museum Folkwang in Germany in 1974. That gave me some recognition, but almost entirely in Germany. The other artists I knew also had more chances in Germany. Minimalist art was not popular in the US. Nobody bought it. It really didn't sell in the 1960s. Even Barnett Newman couldn't sell his works. Ivan Carp who later founded the OK Harris Gallery said it would be ridiculous to ask \$1500 for a large work when Marc Rothko could not sell for \$1000. That is how it was at that time. Prices started to go up with Pop Art.

DISASTER: EVERYTHING LOST

Kuma
For me, the medium and materials of drawing are extremely important. You studied nihonga when you were in Japan. How did your materials and medium change when you started producing art in New York?

Kuwayama
I had never used any materials other than those for nihonga. I had never used oil paints. When I went to New York, I brought Japanese pigments with me. However, those pigments need to be suspended in glue and it was too dry in New York for that. Acrylic paints had just come on the market. Sam Francis, who was a neighbor, suggested that I use those. So I made my own emulsion and suspended the powder pigments in that to make my own paint.

Kuma
Did that create a big shift for you?

Kuwayama
Yes, of course.

Kuma
We can see some of the early works by Kazuo Shiraga for example, who had also been working in nihonga but switched to contemporary art. I am interested in knowing what kind of nihonga painting you were doing.

Kuwayama
All of my early paintings were lost in the disastrous September 1959 Isewan Typhoon, also known as Typhoon Vera. There is nothing left. My whole past was washed away.

Kuma
That stage of your life disappeared.
Was Sam Francis an influence on your development?

Kuwayama
No, we were just friends. He also helped us find a place to live. It was a loft that he thought was a little small for himself but just right for us. We lived there until 1976 when we moved to our current location.

Kuma
So, New York was a place for new works. In a way, there was also a feeling of dryness.

Kuwayama
I would add to that the feeling of freedom. I was doing nihonga in my first year there and then gave it up in the second year. (He points to a catalog photo) This work marked my beginning in what I now call Minimalism.

Kuma
How did you change your style? Did it happen right away?

Kuwayama
I started to make pieces with three-dimensional sculptural elements.

Kuma
Your work seems very architectural to me. In architecture, we think about finalizing materials, color scheme, how corners will be - the balance of these. Perhaps you are thinking about similar issues. In architecture, I don't think it is anymore about grasping the entire silhouette. It is rather more a question of what to do in terms of materials and texture, how to handle the corners, in other words spatial managemet. I feel much in common with you when I see your work.

Kuwayama
I am working mostly with metallics, a dialogue with inorganic metal.

Kuma
What is the undercoat?

Kuwayama

It is Bakelite.

Kuma

What is the advantage of Bakelite?

Kuwayama

It is a very hard material and does not warp.

Originally, a family friend specializing in plywood was making special boards for pianos with an under layer of Bakelite. When I was in Japan, I went to see what he was doing and that's how I started to use Bakelite.

Kuma

So it is based on piano making technology.

Kuwayama

I used a metallic spray. I repeated two colors – pink and yellow.

Kuma

Two colors? I find that surprising. It seems to be more colors than that.

Kuwayama

I repeated the two colors and filled the exhibition space.

Kuma

When making such a work, might you change to different colors after checking the actual exhibition space?

Kuwayama

With metallic, the color looks different depending on the angle and distance from the work it is viewed. If someone stands in front of the work, they see various colors and have a sense of the space.

Kuma

I see.

Kuwayama

It is an interesting and unusual material. I also work with aluminum. It is strongly affected by the reflection of light and gives a feeling like it is popping out. Bakelite is very calm as an undercoat. Depending on the material, even the same design can come out differently.

Kuma

Bakelite and aluminum are inorganic metallic materials and it is interesting that their appearance is subject to change as we face them.

Kuwayama

As soon as the works are hung on the wall, the atmosphere of the space takes over. I am very conscious of the effect of the space.

Kuma

The demarcation of organic and inorganic materials is vague, actually kind of random. So-called inorganic metals contain within them a kind of amazing dialogue with viewers. It is a basic of architecture that whether stone or metal, inorganic materials change when humans come on the scene.

There are not many architects who create architecture with that in mind. But the era of the building silhouette, how to make a building look attractive, has been going on for a long time and this kind of architecture quickly becomes boring.

Kuwayama

That is interesting to me and I feel something in common with my Minimalist work. I'm looking forward to seeing the space you designed for the gallery in Taiwan where I will have my next solo exhibition.

Kuma

Thank you. There are many more things to talk about but I'm afraid our time has unfortunately run out. I hope we will have a chance meet again.

Kuwayama

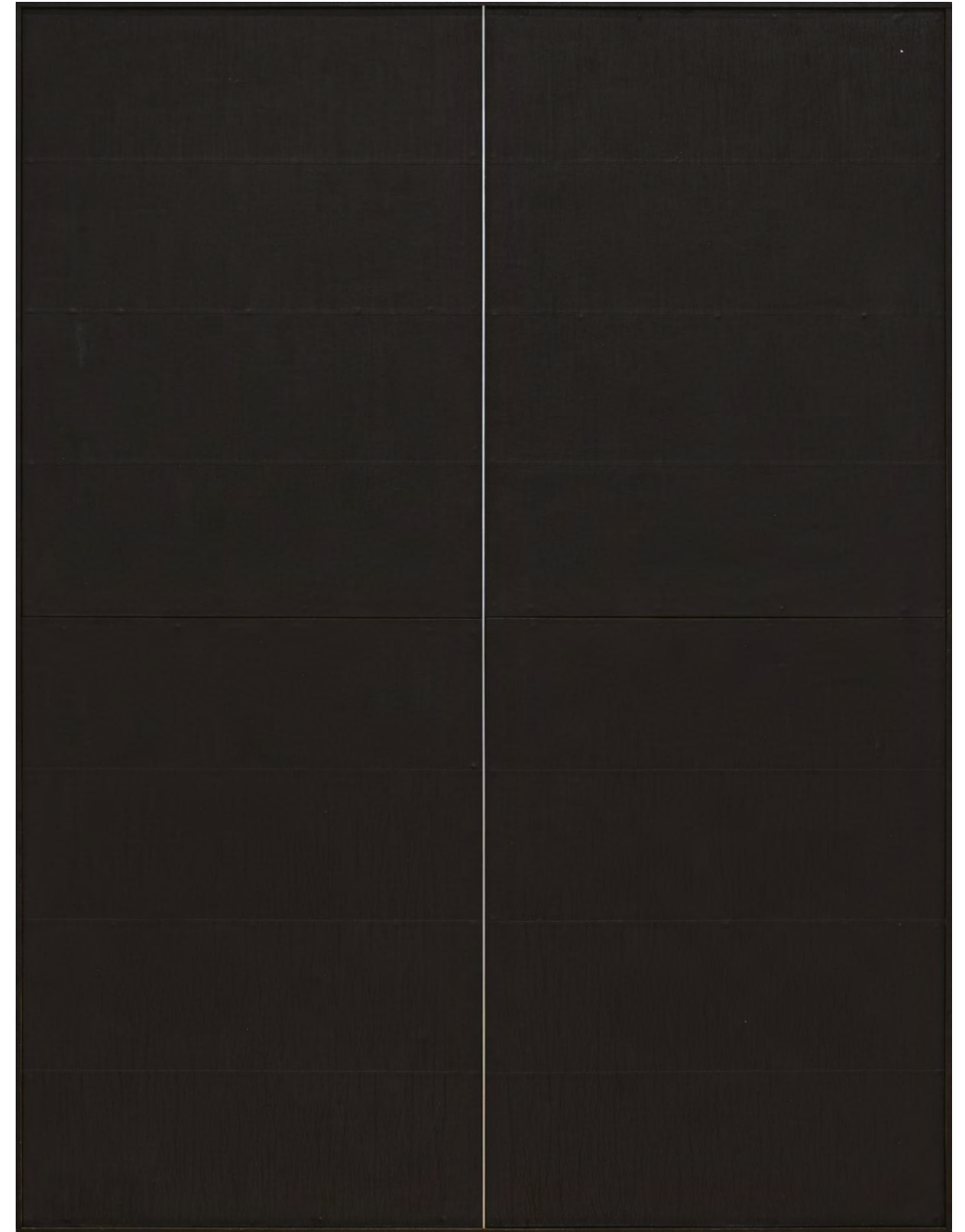
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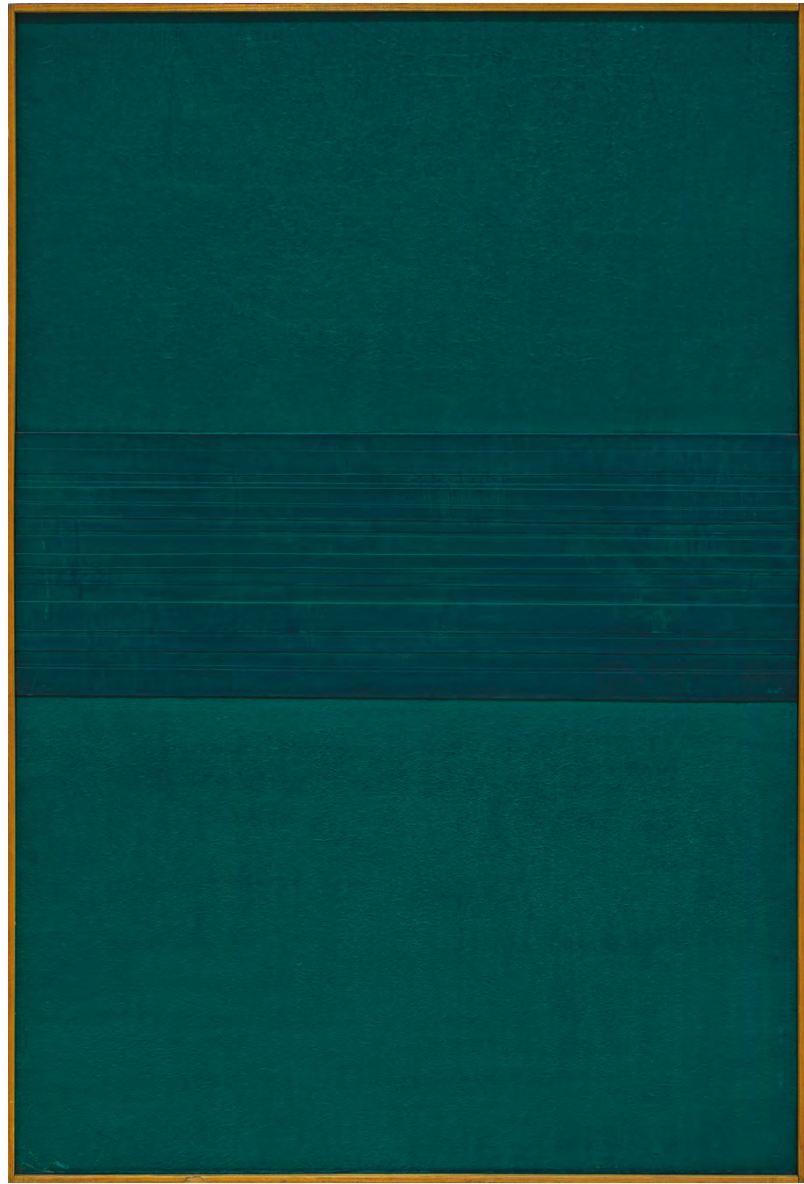
PLATES

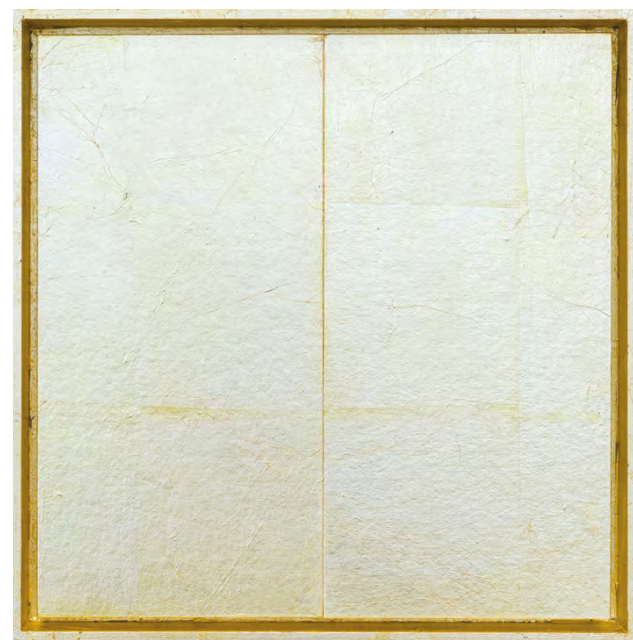


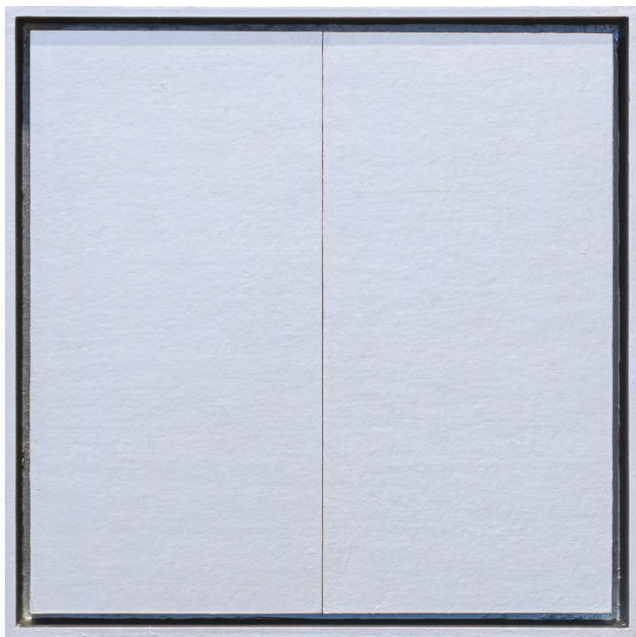












LIST OF WORKS

TADAAKI KUWAYAMA

- p. 26

TK1017 3/8-60

1960

Black dry pigment and silver leaf on paper and on canvas

44 x 44 cm

17 3/8 x 17 3/8 inches
- p. 27

TK11933-61

1961

Black acrylic on paper on board

83.8 x 61 cm

33 x 24 inches
- p. 28

TK8147-61

1961

Black dry pigment with silver leaf on paper on canvas

119.4 x 60.3 cm

47 x 23 3/4 inches
- p. 29

TK8742 1/2-61

1961

Red pigment with silver leaf on canvas

108 x 76.2 cm

42 1/2 x 30 inches
- p. 30

TK11722 3/4-61

1961

White tape on board with acrylic paint

35.6 x 57.8 cm

14 x 22 3/4 inches
- p. 31

TK9536-61

1961

Black dry pigment on tape on board with bronze leaf

91.4 x 62.2 cm

36 x 24 1/2 inches

- p. 32

TK6418-61

1961

Red dry pigment on paper in wooden box

45.7 x 30.5 cm

18 x 12 inches
- p. 33

TK7448-61

1961

Black dry pigment on paper on board with aluminium strip

121.9 x 92.7 cm

48 x 36 1/2 inches
- p. 34

TK7636-61

1961

Deep green pigment on paper on board

91.4 x 61 cm

36 x 24 inches
- p. 35

TK948-62

1962

White tape on board with acrylic paint

121.9 x 77.5 cm

48 x 30 1/2 inches
- p. 36

TK1826-63

1963

Red and yellow pigment on paper on board

66 x 53.3 cm

26 x 21 inches
- p. 37

TK4612 3/4-64

1964

Gold leaf on board

32.4 x 32.4 cm

12 3/4 x 12 3/4 inches

- p. 38

TK4212 3/4-64

1964

Silver on paper on board

32.4 x 32.4 cm

12 3/4 x 12 3/4 inches
- p. 39

TK4716-64

1964

Silver leaf on paper tape on board

28.3 x 41 cm

11 1/8 x 16 1/8 inches

BIOGRAPHY

- 1932 Born in Nagoya, Aichi, Japan
- 1956 BFA, Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, Department of Japanese painting
- 1958 Moved to United States
 - Currently lives and works in New York

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1961 *PAINTINGS*, Green Gallery, New York, NY, USA
- 1962 Green Gallery, New York, NY, USA
- 1962 Swetzoff Gallery, Boston, MA, USA
- 1964 Kornblee Gallery, New York, NY, USA
- 1965 Daniels Gallery, New York, NY, USA
- 1966 *The Systemic Paintings of Kuwayama*, The Red Carpet Gallery, Minneapolis, MN, USA
- 1967 Tokyo Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
- 1967 Galerie Bischofberger, Zurich, Switzerland
- 1967 Galerie Mutzenbach, Dortmund, Germany
- 1967 Franklin Siden Gallery, Detroit, MI, USA
- 1967 *New Paintings*, Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago, IL, USA
- 1968 Galleria del Leone, Venice, Italy
- 1968 Galerie Bischofberger, Zurich, Switzerland
- 1968 Galerie d'Aujourd'hui, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, Belgium
- 1969 Henri Gallery, Washington D.C.
- 1969 Galerie Reckermann, Cologne, Germany
- 1972 *New Paintings*, Henri 2, Washington D.C., USA
- 1973 *Bilder 1966-1973*, Galerie Reckermann, Cologne, Germany
- 1973 Galerie Kowallek, Frankfurt am Main, Germany
- 1973 Kaneko Art Gallery, Tokyo, Japan

- 1974 Kaneko Art Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
- 1974 *Einraum Ausstellungen '74*, Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany
- 1975 *Bilder und Zeichnungen*, Galerie Müller, Stuttgart, Germany
- 1975 Galerie Denise Rene, New York, NY, USA
- 1976 *Drawings Show*, Contemporary Art Laboratory-T, Tokyo, Japan
- 1977 Galerie Denise René, New York, NY, USA
- 1978 Koh Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
- 1979 Sakura Gallery, Aichi, Japan
- 1979 Protech-McIntosh Gallery, Washington D.C., USA
- 1980 *Drawings*, Akira Ikeda Gallery, Aichi, Japan
- 1981 *KUWAYAMA WALLS*, Akira Ikeda Gallery, Aichi, Japan
- 1982 Galerie Linie, Moers, Germany
- 1982 *Ölbilder 1980 bis 1982*, Galerie Reckermann, Cologne, Germany
- 1982 *Ölbilder 1980 bis 1982*, Gimpel-Hanover + André Emmerich Galerie, Zurich, Switzerland
- 1983 *NEW PAINTING*, Akira Ikeda Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
- 1983 Sakura Gallery, Aichi, Japan
- 1984 *New Paintings*, Akira Ikeda Gallery, Aichi, Japan
- 1984 *Early Paintings*, Akira Ikeda Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
- 1985 Laboratory, Hokkaido, Japan
- 1985 Gallery Kasahara, Osaka, Japan
- 1985 *By Two Recent Works*, Gallery Yamaguchi, Osaka, Japan
- 1985 *A Retrospective 1960-1985*, Kitakyushu Municipal Museum of Art, Fukuoka, Japan
- 1988 *New Paintings*, Akira Ikeda Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
- 1988 *Part I: New Paintings – White Series 1986-78*, Gallery Yamaguchi, Osaka, Japan
- 1988 *Part II: Pigment Age – Paper 1960-61*, Gallery Yamaguchi, Osaka, Japan
- 1988 *Part III: Pigment Age – Canvas 1962-65*, Gallery Yamaguchi, Osaka, Japan
- 1988 *Part IV: Cross Chrome Age 1966*, Gallery Yamaguchi, Osaka, Japan
- 1988 *Part V: Chrome Age 1968-69*, Gallery Yamaguchi, Osaka, Japan
- 1989 O.K.Harris Works of Art, New York, NY, USA
- 1989 Michael Walls Gallery, New York, NY, USA
- 1989 *Bilder 1988-1989*, Galerie Reckermann, Cologne, Germany
- 1989 Gallery Yamaguchi, Osaka, Japan
- 1989 Sakura Gallery, Aichi, Japan
- 1989 Nagoya City Art Museum, Aichi, Japan

1990 *Drawings*, Gallery Sumi, Okayama, Japan
1990 *The Snow Country Suite*, Gallery Sumi, Okayama, Japan
1990 *The Snow Country Suite*, Gallery Yonetsu, Tokyo, Japan
1990 *The Snow Country Suite*, Gallery Yamaguchi, Osaka, Japan
1990 *RECENT WORKS 1989-90*, Satani Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
1991 Gilbert Brownstone et Cie, Paris, France
1991 *Recent Works*, Gallery Yamaguchi Warehouse, Osaka, Japan
1991 *NEW PRINTS*, Gallery Yamaguchi, Osaka, Japan
1992 *Metallic Green*, Sakura Gallery, Aichi, Japan
1992 *The Snow Country Suite*, Ibaraki Municipal Kawabata Literature Memorial Hall, Osaka, Japan
1992 *5 Metallic Colors*, Satani Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
1993 *60s-90s*, Shugado Gallery, Osaka, Japan
1993 *Recent Works*, Gallery Yamaguchi, Osaka, Japan
1994 *Drawing on Mylar*, Gallery Yamaguchi, Osaka, Japan
1994 *Pencil and Wax on Paper*, Gallery Yamaguchi, Osaka, Japan
1994 *Past Through Present Eye*, Gallery Yamaguchi, Osaka, Japan
1995 *Project for Stiftung für Konkrete Kunst Reutlingen*, Stiftung für Konkrete Kunst Reutlingen, Reutlingen, Germany
1996 *PROJECT '96*, Kawamura Memorial Museum of Art, Chiba, Japan
1996 *PROJECT '96*, Chiba City Museum of Art, Chiba, Japan
1996 *Recent Drawings*, Satani Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
1997 *Recent Works*, Gallery Yamaguchi, Osaka, Japan
1997 *PROJECT FOR INGOLSTADT*, Museum für Konkrete Kunst (Städtische im Teather Ingolstadt), Ingolstadt, Germany
1997 *A Retrospective for Works*, Galerie Renate Bender, Munich, Germany
1998 *The Zurich Intervention*, Stiftung für Konstruktive und Konkrete Kunst, Zurich, Switzerland
2000 *TADAAKI KUWAYAMA: Positionenreihe 17*, Rupertinum Museum, Salzburg, Austria
2000 *Towards Utopia*, Contemporary Art Space Osaka, Osaka, Japan
2001 Contemporary Art Space Osaka, Osaka, Japan
2001 *Project' 01*, Gallery Yamaguchi, Osaka, Japan
2001 Folin/Riva Gallery, New York, NY, USA
2002 *Tadaaki Kuwayama: Repetition & Continuity II*, Riva Gallery, New York, NY, USA
2002 Galerie Renate Bender, Munich, Germany
2003 *Space as Art-Art as Space*, Gallery Yamaguchi Kunst-bau, Osaka, Japan
2003 *Selected Works 1992-2003*, Tamada Project, Tokyo, Japan
2005 *'90 [part 1-2]*, Gallery Yamaguchi Kunst-bau, Osaka, Japan
2006 Galerie König, Hanau/Frankfurt, Germany
2006 *One Room Project 2006 in Osaka*, Gallery Yamaguchi Kunst-bau, Osaka, Japan
2006 Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, Aichi, Japan

2006 *One Room Project 2006*, Nagoya City Art Museum, Aichi, Japan
2008 *Large Paintings from 60s & 70s*, Gallery Yamaguchi, Osaka, Japan
2008 *PAINTINGS FROM THE 1970s*, Gary Snyder Project Space, New York, NY, USA
2008 Bjorn Ressle Gallery, New York, NY, USA
2008 *Gold & Silver Recent Works*, Gallery Yamaguchi Kunst-bau, Tokyo, Japan
2010 *Out of Silence: Tadaaki Kuwayama*, Nagoya City Art Museum, Aichi, Japan
2011 Gallery Yamaguchi Kunst-bau, Osaka, Japan
2011 *Untitled: Tadaaki Kuwayama*, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Ishikawa, Japan
2011 *White Tadaaki Kuwayama Osaka Project*, The National Museum of Art, Osaka, Japan
2012 Gary Snyder Gallery, New York, NY, USA
2012 *Six Elements or More*, Tayloe Piggott Gallery, Jackson Hole, WY, USA
2012 *TADAAKI KUWAYAMA: HAYAMA*, The Museum Modern Art, Hayama, Kanagawa, Japan
2013 *Titanium*, Gallery Yamaguchi Kunst-bau, Osaka, Japan
2013 *Tadaaki Kuwayama Titanium-Art as Space*, Space as Art, Nagoya University of Art, Art & Designed Center, Aichi, Japan
2013 *60-70s*, Gallery Yamaguchi Kunst-bau, Osaka, Japan
2013 *Titanium 2 Lines*, Gallery Yamaguchi Kunst-bau, Osaka, Japan
2013 *Tadaaki Kuwayama*, Gallery Shilla, Daegu, Korea
2014 *Tadaaki Kuwayama: Pure Painting*, Hill Gallery, Birmingham, MI, USA
2015 *Tadaaki Kuwayama: Early Work, 1962-1975*, Barbara Mathes Gallery, New York, NY, USA
2015 Gallery Shilla, Daegu, Korea
2016 *Not Primary Color*, Hill Gallery, Birmingham, MI, USA
2016 *Tadaaki Kuwayama: Titanium 4 Colors*, Gallery Yamaguchi Kunst-bau, Osaka, Japan
2016 *Tadaaki Kuwayama: From the 60s Till Today*, Galerie Grand Siecle, Taipei
2017 *Recent Works*, Willem Baars Projects, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
2017 *Tadaaki Kuwayama: Radical Neutrality*, The Mayor Gallery, London, UK
2018 Taka Ishii Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
2019 Nonaka-Hill, Los Angeles, CA, USA
2022 Alison Bradley Projects, New York City, NY, USA (Curated by Gabriela Rangel)
2022 *In Your Arms I'm Radiant*, Shoshana Wayne Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA

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Rakuko Naito and Tadaaki Kuwayama, 2018

