

Yayoi Kusama: *I Want Your Tears to Flow with the Words I Wrote*

Exhibition 4 June–31 July 2021

Victoria Miro, 16 Wharf Road, London N1 7RW



Yayoi Kusama: *On Hearing the Sunset Afterglow's Message of Love, My Heart Shed Tears*, 2021
Acrylic on canvas
130.3 x 130.3 cm
51 1/4 x 51 1/4 in
© YAYOI KUSAMA
Courtesy Ota Fine Arts and Victoria Miro

Victoria Miro is delighted to present Yayoi Kusama's thirteenth solo exhibition with the gallery. This major presentation of new works features a dynamic installation of paintings from Kusama's iconic *My Eternal Soul* series, bronze pumpkins and painted soft sculptures. Additionally, a newly realised sculpture, presented within a darkened interior and internally lit, offers viewers the opportunity to examine the central themes of Kusama's art: infinite reflection, the bounded and the boundless.

Throughout her career, Yayoi Kusama has developed a unique and diverse body of work that, highly personal in nature, connects profoundly with global audiences. Continuing to address the twin themes of cosmic infinity and personal obsession, the works in this exhibition are testament to an artist at the height of her powers.

The powerful installation of *My Eternal Soul* paintings in the lower gallery introduces new and recent examples drawn from the artist's highly celebrated, ongoing series, which she commenced in 2009. These works, at once bold and intensely detailed and conveying extraordinary vitality, are joyfully improvisatory, fluid and highly instinctual. Installed alongside the paintings are a series of soft sculptures. They have been a key tenet of Kusama's oeuvre since the early 1960s, pre-empting many famous examples from that decade and inspiring many others subsequently. The sculptures on view appear as though Kusama's signature stylistic marks have been released from the canvases they are surrounded by and have organised themselves into three-dimensional forms. Writing about the genesis of this aspect of her practice Kusama explains, 'From around 1961 something new

appeared in the world of my art. It came to be known as “soft sculpture”. The nets I was painting had continued to proliferate until they had spread beyond the canvas to cover the tables, the floor, the chairs, and the walls. The result of the unlimited development of this obsessional art was that I was able to shed my painter’s skin and metamorphose into an environmental sculptor. I went on finding new ways to turn my obsessions into concrete forms.’ A further work, *I Who Was Awestruck at the Shape of the Secret I Found in the Cosmos*, incorporates organic forms contained within – yet appearing almost to overflow from – a succession of wall-mounted boxes, and accentuates a tension between notions of containment and release.

In the upper gallery and waterside garden, a series of bronze pumpkins take a dynamic new form, their surfaces impressed with patterns of circles that create a sophisticated geometry. Each pumpkin has a distinct character, as if caught in a particular stage of growth. Arrangements of dots on their plump bodies and curving stems, meanwhile, seem as unique as fingerprints. In this context we will also feature new *Pumpkin* paintings, a motif Kusama first worked with in the 1940s and which has been central to her practice since. Enchanted by their ‘charming and winsome’ forms, the artist has said it is the pumpkin’s air of ‘general unpretentiousness’ and ‘solid spiritual balance’ that appeals to her.

Phantom Polka Dots of Fate, Ordained by Heaven, Were the Greatest Gift Ever for Me is a newly realised sculpture comprising a five-sided chamber held aloft on elegant metal legs. Presented within a darkened interior it appears almost to float in the space. The sides of the pentagon, some of which are mirrored, some transparent, both reflect the work’s surroundings and offer views of its contents. Positioned inside are three tentacle-like forms, each lit from within, which rise up through the chamber in a sinuous formation that is repeated in two-dimensional form on a number of the interior panels. Over the decades, Kusama’s rendering of pumpkin ‘skin’ has grown ever more sophisticated, with lines of dots advancing rhythmically or appearing to twist into elongated vertical vine- or tentacle-like forms, as in this new sculpture. Completed in a signature palette of yellow and black, its dotted vertical forms pulsing with optical energy, the work reflects Kusama’s lifelong preoccupation with the infinite and sublime, as well as the twin themes of cosmic infinity and personal obsession as found in pattern and repetition. For the viewer it is an opportunity to examine the central themes of Kusama’s art: infinite reflection, the bounded and the boundless.

About the artist

Born in Matsumoto City, Japan, in 1929, Yayoi Kusama lives and works in Tokyo. She is one of the world’s most celebrated artists. Over the past decade there have been museum exhibitions of Kusama’s work touring the world in North America, Japan, Korea, Singapore, China, Australia, Russia, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Chile, Spain, England, France, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland. In 2016, Kusama received the Order of Culture, one of the highest honours bestowed by the Imperial Family. Kusama is the first woman to be honoured with the prestigious medal for drawings and sculptures.

KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature is currently on view at The New York Botanical Garden, Bronx, New York, until 31 October 2021. *Yayoi Kusama: A Retrospective* is at the Gropius Bau in Berlin until 15 August 2021. *Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirror Rooms* continues at Tate Modern, London, until 12 June 2022. Exhibitions of *My Eternal Soul* paintings will be presented at David Zwirner, New York, on 17 June and Ota Fine Arts, Tokyo, on 19 June.

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