

Yayoi Kusama: *EVERY DAY I PRAY FOR LOVE*

Exhibition: 25 September–2 November 2024

16 Wharf Road, London N1 7RW



Image: Yayoi Kusama
Photo by Yusuke Miyazaki
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Courtesy Ota Fine Arts, Victoria Miro, and David Zwirner

Victoria Miro is delighted to present Yayoi Kusama’s fourteenth solo exhibition with the gallery. Yayoi Kusama: *EVERY DAY I PRAY FOR LOVE* offers a rare chance to experience a new *Infinity Mirrored Room – Beauty Described by a Spherical Heart* and introduces works from the artist’s latest series of paintings and sculptures.

‘Thousands of illuminated colours blinking at the speed of light – isn’t this the very illusion of Life in our transient world.’ — Yayoi Kusama

The exhibition marks the debut of *Infinity Mirrored Room – Beauty Described by a Spherical Heart*, 2024, which envelops visitors inside a pulsating, light-filled, hexagonal space.

The work explores the interplay between two seminal elements within Kusama’s practice, the sphere and reflective immersive space. The idea of the reflected gaze developed within Kusama’s practice in the mid 1960s. This new work incorporates the dynamic, interactive relationship between the mirror and the sphere, and aligns with two of her iconic early works, *Infinity Mirrored Room – Love Forever* and *Narcissus Garden*, both of which originated in 1966.

Situated in the ground floor gallery, *Infinity Mirrored Room – Beauty Described by a Spherical Heart* features a ceiling of coloured flashing LED lights arranged in a concentric pattern whose reflections produce an infinite honeycomb. Within this sensory environment, a large, mirrored sphere hangs in the centre of the space. This orb, the heart of the work, adds to the wonder of the pulsating lights and creates spectacular, distorted reflections as visitors see themselves endlessly echoed within the limitless boundaries of their perception.

Presented alongside the mirror room is *Death of Nerves*, 2022, which was originally commissioned by M+ museum, Hong Kong to feature as part of the 2022 exhibition *Yayoi Kusama: 1945 to Now*, the largest retrospective to date of Kusama's work in Asia outside of Japan. This installation, consisting of numerous multicoloured sewn, stuffed-fabric elements reminiscent of tendrils, vines or even a nervous system, is here suspended within the entire volume of Victoria Miro's architectural void. The work drops as though a waterfall from the ceiling beams of the upper gallery, coming to rest on the ground floor fifteen metres below. Kusama's signature polka-dot motif is emblazoned across the sinuous forms of this work, which, despite bearing a rather macabre title, joyously emphasises the cycle of regeneration, and the interconnectedness of life and death.

The exhibition also introduces new paintings from the artist's most recent series, *Every Day I Pray for Love*, 2021-ongoing, displayed in a dynamic configuration in the upper gallery. Created in a more intimate format, these paintings continue the artist's singular explorations of line and form. Often minutely detailed, with characteristically bold accents of colour, they evoke both microscopic and macroscopic universes. Improvisatory, fluid and highly instinctual, the new paintings abound with imagery including eyes, faces in profile, and other more indeterminate forms, including dots and nets with which the artist's name is synonymous. About the paintings, poet, curator and critic Akira Tatehata has said '*they feel even more endearing, conveying a strong impression of Kusama's sense of humour and her fluid, free-running lines.*'

Featured together with the paintings, *The Moment of Regeneration*, 2024, is a large-scale sculptural installation that reflects upon Kusama's career-long interest in the infinite and the sublime. In this work, a cluster of red-and-black sewn, stuffed fabric forms appears to emerge organically from the floor, extending upwards and branching outwards in a circular configuration. Bringing to mind a stand of polka-dotted trees in a patterned, primordial forest, with Kusama's characteristic singularity of vision *The Moment of Regeneration* considers the cycles of growth and decay inherent to all life, and embodies an optimism for renewal.

Located in Victoria Miro's canal-side garden, *Ladder to Heaven*, 2024, is the latest in a series of works by Kusama which employs the device of a ladder to suggest expansion into space. The upright sculpture stands at almost four metres high, and, composed of highly polished stainless steel, reflects its

surroundings as well as offers the illusion, via two circular panels at the top and base of the ladder, of both infinite ascension and descension. Kusama's previous ladder works have incorporated illuminated strips which pulse with an ever-changing pattern of colours. For the first time, Kusama has created an outdoor ladder sculpture. The surface is perforated in a cut-out polka dot pattern that enables light to reflect and pass through the frame, focusing the viewers' attention on the potential journey a ladder offers.

Women's profiles and eyes have been important and repeated motifs throughout Kusama's practice, appearing in some of her earliest works. Also in the garden are three new sculptures, *Every Day I Pray for Love – Women*, *Every Day I Pray for Love - Women with Necklaces* and *Every Day I Pray for Love – Women's Profiles*, 2024, which are derived directly from imagery found within Kusama's *Every Day I Pray for Love* paintings. These sculptures, the first of their kind, initiating a new series of bronze works, bring to lively three-dimensional form the hand-drawn female faces which feature in several of Kusama's most recent paintings. Bearing differing imagery on each side, these bronze works offer a delightfully unexpected encounter with Kusama's iconography.

The exhibition is accompanied by a new publication, available from 29 October, and features new text by the poet, critic and curator, Akira Tatehata.

About the artist

Yayoi Kusama (b. 1929, Japan) is one of the most important and influential artists in the history of contemporary art. She is renowned for her prolific and ground-breaking practice, spanning paintings, sculptures, performances, moving images, large-scale installations, fashion, and writing (including novels and poems). Trained in traditional Japanese painting, she moved to the United States in 1957 and soon established herself in the American and European avant-garde for her unique and radical artistic language. She returned to Japan in 1973 and has relentlessly reinvented and created art that resonates with the time in which she lives.

Work by the artist is held in museum collections worldwide, including the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Tate Gallery, London; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; among numerous others. Kusama lives and works in Tokyo.

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