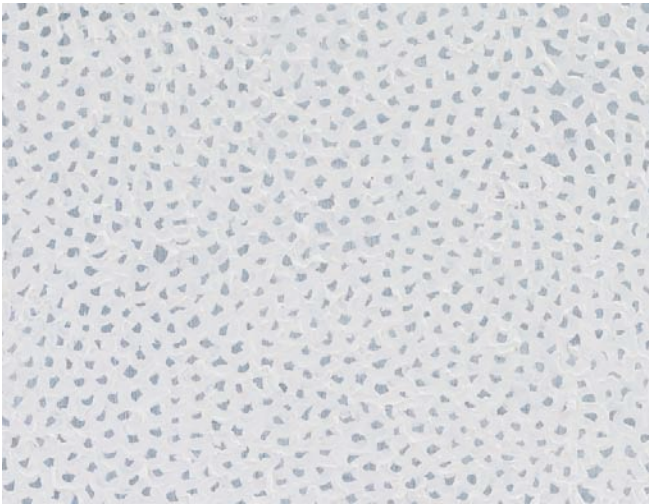


PRESS RELEASE

Inaugural exhibition at Victoria Miro | Mayfair

Yayoi Kusama White Infinity Nets

1 October to 9 November 2013



Victoria Miro is delighted to inaugurate its new Mayfair gallery with a presentation of recent white *Infinity Net* paintings by Yayoi Kusama. It is the first time Kusama has exclusively shown white Infinity Nets in Europe and in its select concentration on these iconic works the exhibition recalls Kusama's debut solo show in New York at the Brata Gallery in October 1959.

From a distance these delicate paintings read as monochromes, but up close their intricate surfaces become visible: small arched semi-circles of white paint almost completely covering the ground of the canvases. On each painting the underlay, a wash of black or grey, is obscured by an intricate network of gestural scallops of paint that combine to form a net. The paintings are characterised by an all-over surface that suggests detailed lattice- or lacework. The nets appear to extend beyond the picture planes, suggesting the potential to expand indefinitely.

The first Infinity Nets Kusama produced in the 1950s and 60s were white although she subsequently also made coloured net paintings. Since these first iterations she has returned periodically to Infinity Nets, and these works have become a touchstone in her practice for over half a century. Her repeated revisiting and expansion of this significant body of work highlights its continued importance to the artist. Her adoption of the title *Infinity Net* for her autobiography also reflects their standing throughout her career. In her autobiography, which is published in paperback by Tate Publishing this September, Kusama describes her first exhibition:

"I debuted in New York with just five works – monochromatic and simple, yet complex, subconscious accumulations of microcosmic lights, in which the spatial universe unfolds as far as the eye can see. Yet at first glance the canvases, which were up to 14ft in length, looked like nothing at all – just plain white surfaces".

The paintings immediately gained critical recognition and were instrumental in making the artist's name in New York in the 1960s. Donald Judd, one of Kusama's earliest and closest friends in New York, was the first collector of white Infinity Net paintings and brilliantly championed the work in his review of the exhibition. The paintings openly display the process of their construction, making evident the obsessive diligence with which they were made. From their earliest iterations, the white Infinity Nets have been produced in intense, protracted bursts of energy. In her early experiments with the form in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Kusama compulsively painted nets for hours on end without eating or sleeping. Even today when working on new Infinity Net paintings her focus is single-minded and relentless.

This is in part because the paintings have such an important position in Kusama's history and personal mythology. The artist has described her Infinity Net paintings as visualisations of hallucinations that have recurred since her childhood. During these episodes her visual field is obscured by an overlay of nets or dots that appear to cover her surroundings. These hallucinations are just one manifestation of psychological ill health that has plagued the artist for most of her life. She describes her primary symptom as a sense of depersonalisation, of feeling removed from reality. The nets in her paintings can be read as obscuring screens that allow only a partial view of what lies behind or beyond. The ground beneath the nets is visible only as specks, or, more accurately in Kusama's terms, dots.

Kusama's White Infinity Net paintings are recognized as some of the most compelling works of her extraordinary oeuvre. The artist has always worked serially, but her periodic return to the white Infinity Nets is something else: it is as if from time to time she is compelled to re-immers herself in this body of work, representing as it does the purest expression of her artistic manifesto. This exhibition both in its scale and focussed presentation will completely surround the viewer with white Infinity Nets in an echo of some of her earliest solo shows in America from the 50s and 60s.

One of the most revered artists of her generation, Kusama is known for a rich and diverse artistic oeuvre, which includes painting, sculpture, printmaking, installation, film and performance. Although her practice resists singular characterisation the Infinity Nets have strong associations with several major post-war artistic movements. In the United States, Infinity Net paintings have been contextualised with Minimal and Op painting. Their gestural surfaces also ally them with the work of artists affiliated with Post-Minimalism. In Europe, early Infinity Nets were shown alongside, and discussed in relation to, work by artists in the Zero and Nul movements. Despite their historical resonances, however, the Infinity Nets are not historical artefacts. As this new group of work demonstrates, the paintings remain contemporary and relevant, continuing to engage and enthral viewers in the artist's ninth decade.

Biographical Details: Born in Matsumoto City, Japan in 1929, Kusama now lives and works in Tokyo. Kusama represented Japan at the Venice Biennale in 1993 and has been the subject of many major international museum exhibitions, including a major touring retrospective in 2011-12 presented at Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Tate Modern, London; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. She is currently the subject of three major international museum exhibitions: *Yayoi Kusama: Infinite Obsession* at Malba – Fundación Costantini, Buenos Aires (June-September 2013, travelling to Centro Cultural Banco do Brazil, Rio de Janeiro; Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo; Cento Cultural Banco de Brazil, Brasilia; and Museo del Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City); and *Kusama Yayoi: A Dream I Dreamed*, Daegu Art Musuem, Korea (July-November 2013, travelling to Seoul Arts Centre, Korea; Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai; Taipei City Museum, Taiwan, and several other venues in Asia); and *Yayoi Kusama: Eternity of Eternal Eternity*, The National Museum of Art, Osaka (January-April 2012, travelling to The Museum of Modern Art, Saitama; Matsumoto City Museum of Art; Niigata City Art Museum; Shizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art and other Japanese venues).

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Opening Times 10am – 6pm. Tuesday to Saturday. Admission Free

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