Masako Miki Showcases New Work in BAMPFA Exhibition

On View January 9 through April 28, 2019

Masako Miki / MATRIX 273 Highlights Berkeley-based Artist’s Distinctive Sculpture Installations, Inspired by Japanese Folklore

(Berkeley, CA) December 17, 2018—The UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) opens its 2019 exhibition season with a presentation of new work by the acclaimed Berkeley-based artist and designer Masako Miki. An important figure in the Bay Area’s creative community for more than two decades, Miki creates colorful forms in a range of media, which are inspired by her interest in the folklore traditions and religious practices of her native Japan. Miki is the latest artist to present new work in BAMPFA’s MATRIX Program, an exhibition series that highlights distinctive voices in contemporary art.

For her exhibition at BAMPFA, Miki has created more than a dozen large-scale felt-covered sculptures that appear as dreamlike shapes, subtly invoking figurative objects such as lips, umbrellas, and insects. These works draw on the artist’s interest in Shinto, Buddhist, and traditional Japanese culture, such as the belief in shape-shifting spirits (yōkai), which Miki references in the titles of works like Kinoko (Mushroom Ghost) and Nyōjjizai (Animated Back-Scratcher). Brightly colored and gently playful, the sculptures are displayed at BAMPFA in an immersive installation that also includes abstract images on the floor and walls of the exhibition gallery. The interplay of shapes creates a sense of fluidity between two and three dimensions, alluding to the intersection of corporeal and spiritual worlds that is a recurrent theme of Japanese folklore and of Miki’s own practice.
Born in the Japanese city of Osaka, Miki has made the Bay Area, and Berkeley in particular, her home for more than twenty years. Her work often explores her personal relationship to Japanese traditions, such as communicating with the deceased in Obon ceremonies, in which the dead return each year to visit their living relatives. As Miki describes her practice, “I want to create a context where the familiar and unfamiliar lose their distinctions and the boundaries of dichotomies become blurred. By reinventing narratives from my cultural traditions, I want to suggest alternative interpretations where new synthesis becomes possible.”

Miki’s exhibition at BAMPFA arrives at a moment of increasing visibility for the artist, who in recent years has held residencies at the de Young Museum in San Francisco and at Facebook’s headquarters in Silicon Valley—where she installed a large-scale mural depicting a wolf and whale that remains on view in the company’s Menlo Park offices. Miki was also an artist in residence at The Watermill Center, where she completed a commissioned installation. Her MATRIX show coincides with the exhibition Masako Miki: Shapeshifters on view at her San Francisco gallery CULT Aimee Friberg Exhibitions from January 12 through February 23.

BAMPFA hosts Miki for an artist’s talk on Wednesday, January 16 at noon, where she discusses Shinto traditions in Japan, how they address questions of boundaries in life, and how these ideas have developed and manifested in her practice. Families are also invited to engage with Miki’s work during two Gallery + Studio Workshops on Saturday, January 12 at 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m., where local artist and educator Erin McCluskey Wheeler instructs participants on how to create small, anthropomorphic friends out of felt, fabric, and found objects. All programs are free with museum admission.

“We’re pleased to provide a platform for the work of Masako Miki, an artist who stands out in the Bay Area’s vibrant creative community for work that is both aesthetically ambitious and warmly accessible,” said BAMPFA’s Senior Curator for Asian Art Julia M. White. “Especially in a year when BAMPFA’s historical Japanese collections are a central focus of our exhibition and film programming, it’s exciting to present new work by an artist who is reimagining centuries-old Japanese cultural traditions with such a fresh and thoughtful perspective.”

Masako Miki / MATRIX 273 takes place during a year in which several programs drawing upon BAMPFA’s significant collections of Japanese art and film are featured, including the film series Japanese Film Classics from the BAMPFA Collection (December 12, 2018–January 27, 2019) and the exhibitions Ink, Paper, Silk: One Hundred Years of Collecting Japanese Art (December 12, 2018–April 14, 2019), Hinges: Sakaki Hyakusen and the Birth of Nanga Painting (October 2, 2019–February 2, 2020), and others to be announced.

Thanks
Masako Miki / MATRIX 273 is organized by Julia M. White, senior curator for Asian art, with Matthew Coleman, curatorial assistant. The MATRIX Program is made possible by a generous endowment gift from Phyllis C. Wattis and the continued support of the BAMPFA Trustees.
Above

1. Masako Miki: *Kuchisake-onna (Mouth Tear Woman)*, 2018; wool on foam, cherry wood; 42 x 71 x 13 in.; courtesy of the artist and CULT Aimee Friberg Exhibitions.

2. Masako Miki: *Karakasa-obake (Umbrella Ghost)*, 74 x 21 x 21 in.; *Ungeikyo (Possessed Mirror)*, 25 1/2 x 35 x 10 in.; and *Kinoko (Mushroom Ghost)*, 38 x 34 x 19 in.; all 2018; wool on foam, walnut and wenge wood; courtesy of the artist and CULT Aimee Friberg Exhibitions.

Visitor Information

Address
2155 Center Street, Berkeley, CA 94720

Hours
Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Fridays and Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

$13 general admission
$11 non-UC Berkeley students, disabled, 65+
FREE BAMPFA members; UC Berkeley students, faculty, staff; 18 & under; one adult per child 13 & under

Information
bampfa.org
(510) 642-0808

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About Masako Miki

Born in Osaka, Japan in 1973, Masako Miki received her BFA from Notre Dame De Namur University in 1996 and her MFA from San Jose State University in 2001. She has had solo and two-person exhibitions at The Watermill Center, Water Mill, New York; the de Young Museum, San Francisco; CULT Aimee Friberg Exhibitions, San Francisco; and elsewhere. Her work has been featured in group exhibitions at The Lab, San Francisco; the Worth Ryder Art Gallery, University of California, Berkeley; Kala Art Institute, Berkeley; Headlands Center for the Arts, San Francisco; Root Division Gallery, San Francisco; BAMPFA; and Pro Arts Gallery, Oakland; among others. Miki was an artist in residence at The Watermill Center where she also completed a commissioned installation; Kala Art Institute; the de Young Museum; Facebook, Menlo Park, California; Kamiyama Artists in Residency, Tokushima, Japan; Project 387, Gualala, California; and Wassaic Project, Wassiac, New York. Among many honors, she received the Inga Maren Otto Fellow Award from The Watermill Center in 2018; the Artist Fellowship Award from Kala Art Institute in 2017; and The Santo Foundation Individual Artist Award in 2010. She is represented by CULT Aimee Friberg Exhibitions, San Francisco and she lives and works in Berkeley, California.

About BAMPFA

An internationally recognized arts institution with deep roots in the Bay Area, the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) is a forum for cultural experiences that transform individuals and advance the local, national, and global discourse on art and film. BAMPFA is UC Berkeley’s premier visual arts venue, presenting more than 450 film screenings, scores of public programs, and more than twenty exhibitions annually. With its vibrant and eclectic programming, BAMPFA inspires the imagination and ignites critical dialogue through art, film, and other forms of creative expression.
The institution’s collection of more than 25,000 works of art dates from 3000 BCE to the present day and includes important holdings of Neolithic Chinese ceramics, Ming and Qing Dynasty Chinese painting, Old Master works on paper, Italian Baroque painting, early American painting, Abstract Expressionist painting, contemporary photography, and Conceptual art. BAMPFA’s collection also includes more than 17,500 films and videos, including the largest collection of Japanese cinema outside of Japan, impressive holdings of Soviet cinema, West Coast avant-garde film, and seminal video art, as well as hundreds of thousands of articles, reviews, posters, and other ephemera related to the history of film.

About MATRIX
MATRIX, a changing series of contemporary art exhibitions, introduces the Bay Area community to exceptional work being made internationally, nationally, and locally, creating a rich connection to the current dialogues on contemporary art and demonstrating that the art of this moment is vital, dynamic, and often challenging. Confronting traditional practices of display and encouraging new, open modes of artistic creation, MATRIX provides an experimental framework for an active interchange between the artist, the museum, and the viewer.

MATRIX was created at the Wadsworth Atheneum in 1974 by then-director James Elliot as an experimental pilot project, supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. When Elliot became the director at BAMPFA in 1978, he introduced the program to the Bay Area. The series has since presented more than 250 exhibitions at BAMPFA. The MATRIX program has served as a leading model for contemporary exhibition practices, inspiring museums across the country to develop project series of their own, under different names, that spotlight leading contemporary artists.

Over the past forty years, MATRIX has featured artists such as Jean-Michel Basquiat, Louise Bourgeois, James Lee Byars, Sophie Calle, Jay DeFeo, Willem de Kooning, Juan Downey, Eva Hesse, Sol LeWitt, Shirin Neshat, Nancy Spero, Cecilia Vicuña, Andy Warhol, and scores of others. More recently, MATRIX has sought to establish a dynamic balance between international, national, and local artists, featuring artists such as Zarouhie Abdalian, Michael Armitage, Geta Brătescu, Will Brown, Cecilia Edefalk, Paz Errázuriz, Nicole Eisenman, Myoko Ito, Anna Maria Maiolino, Otobong Nkanga, Will Rogan, Linda Stark, and John Zurier.