



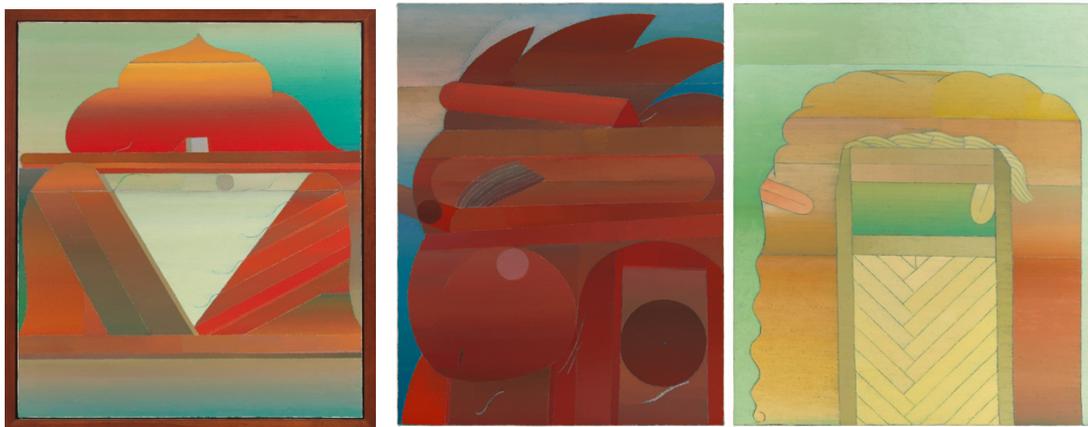
PRESS RELEASE

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BAMPFA Mounts First Solo Museum Retrospective in Nearly Four Decades of Work by Miyoko Ito

On View September 27, 2017–January 28, 2018

Exhibition Highlights Three Decades of Work by Midcentury Abstract Painter, A Prominent Figure in Chicago's Postwar Art Scene



(Berkeley, CA) September 18, 2017—The work of one of Chicago's significant, yet understudied abstract painters receives its first museum presentation in nearly four decades this fall at the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive ([BAMPFA](#)). [Miyoko Ito / MATRIX 267](#) marks the first solo exhibition of work by Miyoko Ito (1918–1983) in her native Berkeley, where she was born and raised in a Japanese American family before relocating to Chicago after World War II. Spanning several decades of the artist's practice, the exhibition is the latest installment in BAMPFA's [MATRIX Program](#), which introduces Bay Area audiences to exceptional voices in contemporary art.

Ito first came to prominence in Chicago's vibrant postwar art scene, where her abstract compositions, often inflected with Surrealist undertones, were an influence on a younger generation of artists—including Roger Brown, Gladys Nilsson, Jim Nutt, Barbara Rossi, and others—who became associated with the Chicago Imagist movement. Ito's practice began in Berkeley, where she was a student in UC Berkeley's Department of Art Practice. Her studies were interrupted by WWII, when she and her husband were forced to move to Tanforan, an internment camp in San Bruno, along with thousands of other Japanese Americans. Once liberated, Ito briefly pursued graduate studies at Smith College before transferring to the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Sometimes referred to as “organic abstraction,” Ito’s paintings are characterized by nuanced colors and geometric forms that seem to hint at a dreamlike topography or suggest elusive figures. The twelve works selected for the BAMPFA exhibition span 23 years of the artist’s practice, during which she exhibited at Chicago’s Hyde Park Art Center and had a retrospective at the Renaissance Society in 1980. In 1972, Chicago’s Museum of Contemporary Art featured Ito’s work in the landmark group exhibition *Chicago Imagist Art*, affirming her role as an instigating figure in this internationally recognized movement. She received numerous accolades throughout her career, including a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1977. Yet her work has remained little known outside of Chicago, an oversight this exhibition seeks to rectify by presenting this selection of extraordinary paintings to West Coast audiences.

“We are thrilled to be hosting this homecoming of sorts for Miyoko Ito, bringing her work to Berkeley where she was born and raised, and yet where it has never been shown,” said Apsara DiQuinzio, curator of modern and contemporary art and Phyllis C. Wattis MATRIX curator at BAMPFA. “Despite its historical nature, this exhibition upholds the MATRIX objective to introduce Bay Area audiences to new, important work that may have been overlooked in the past, and which is just as relevant and fresh now as it was when it was made.”

“Ito’s legacy primarily lies in her articulation of the tension between inner and outer lives. Many of her works position a highly constructed form against a distant horizon of saturated color. The reference to landscape painting is overt, but her work compellingly suggests a deeper engagement with psychological environments,” said Guest Curator Jordan Stein. “In this way, Ito’s paintings are both first-person and topographic—pictures of an artist endeavoring to place herself in often hazy and remote surroundings.”

In conjunction with the exhibition opening, BAMPFA hosts a [curator’s talk](#) with Stein on Wednesday, September 27 at 6 p.m. Stein also presents a [lecture](#) on Ito’s work on Sunday, December 2 at 1 p.m. that includes excerpts from a rare video interview with the artist. On Saturday, October 14 at 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m., BAMPFA hosts a family-friendly [gallery and studio workshop](#) with local artist Erin McCluskey Wheeler inspired by Ito’s distinctive use of color. All programs are free with admission.

Support

Miyoko Ito / MATRIX 267 is organized by guest curator Jordan Stein. 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) Miyoko Ito: *Island in the Sun*, 1978; oil on canvas; 38 x 33 in.; courtesy of John B. Pittman; © The Estate of Miyoko Ito. Photo: Tom Van Eynde.
- 2) Miyoko Ito: *First Verdone*, 1983; oil on canvas; 26 x 20 in.; courtesy of Jim Nutt and Gladys Nilsson; © The Estate of Miyoko Ito. Photo: Tom Van Eynde.
- 3) Miyoko Ito: *Oracle*, 1967-1968; oil on canvas; 47 3/8 x 37 3/4 in.; courtesy of Jim Nutt and Gladys Nilsson; © The Estate of Miyoko Ito. Photo: Tom Van Eynde.

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.

Information
bampfa.org
(510) 642-0808

Gallery Admission

\$12 general admission
\$10 non-Berkeley students, disabled, 65+
Free for BAMPFA members; UC Berkeley students, faculty, staff, and retirees; 18 & under + one adult
Free First Thursdays: Free gallery admission on the first Thursday of each month

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About MATRIX

The MATRIX Program for Contemporary Art 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 analysis, MATRIX provides an experimental framework for an active interchange between the artist, the museum, and the viewer. There have been hundreds of shows at BAMPFA since the program's inception in 1978.

Over more than thirty years MATRIX has featured artists such as John Baldessari, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Louise Bourgeois, Sophie Calle, Nan Goldin, Eva Hesse, Sol LeWitt, Shirin Neshat, Nancy Spero, and Andy Warhol. In recent years MATRIX has embraced a greater international scope, with the roster including Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Peter Doig, Omer Fast, Tobias Rehberger, Ernesto Neto, Rosalind Nashashibi, Tomás Saraceno, Mario García Torres, and Apichatpong Weerasethakul, representing countries as diverse as Finland, Germany, Iran, Mexico, Thailand, Brazil, and many others.

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 up to 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 19,000 works of art dates from 3,000 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, seminal video art, as well as hundreds of thousands of articles, reviews, posters, and other ephemera related to the history of film.