

Miya Ando: Vespertine Clouds (Yūgumo)

January 13 – February 26, 2024

We are pleased to present new paintings on metal by Miya Ando (b. 1973, Los Angeles). The New York-based artist created this body of work centering on cloud formations captured in the evening hours. This is Ando's first solo exhibition in Singapore since 2019.

Ando's cloud works have been showcased in a number of museum exhibitions, including a group show at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C., a solo show at The Noguchi Museum, New York, and a group show at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, where her 2016 painting *Kumo (Cloud) 6* was acquired for the museum's permanent collection. Most recently, her work was on view in the exhibition *Earth and Sky* at Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, Arizona, September 23, 2023 – January 7, 2024.

The cloud series is rooted in the Japanese concept *mono no aware*, which loosely translates as "an acute awareness of the transience of things", a sentiment often linked to nature and the passage of time. For Ando, who was raised between two vastly different worlds—a Buddhist temple in Japan and the redwood forest of northern California—the cyclical nature of clouds and other elements in the natural world serve as a metaphor for impermanence and interdependence.

As Ando states "the natural world is a part of my vocabulary because it is a universal way of discussing the human condition." Like the temporality of shifting clouds or falling leaves, our time here is impermanent. It's a concept that in Western culture may be perceived as nihilistic, but for Ando, who is informed by her experience growing up in Japan, it's quite the opposite. "The paintings invite viewers to consider an alternative perspective—to become aware of and to appreciate the present moment."

Over the course of her career, Ando has focused on a variety of natural phenomena to express her ideas, from the seventy-two micro-seasons of an early Japanese calendar system (the subject of a 2019 solo exhibition at Sundaram Tagore Gallery Singapore) to the phases of the moon. Clouds, however, have been a lifelong fascination.

One of Ando's formative experiences was apprenticing for a master metalsmith in Japan, where she encountered the powerful imagery of the *hamon*, a cloud-like pattern that appears along the edge of a sword. The *hamon* is an effect of a traditional hardening process unique to Japanese swordsmithing. The duality of soft, vaporous patterns articulated in hardened steel not only helped shape the young artist's visual vocabulary, but it also reaffirmed her instinct that materiality would be a significant aspect of her practice. The philosophical metaphor of swords and clouds would later manifest in her work as a transformation of materials that convey strength and permanence to express ideas of impermanence and the ephemeral qualities of beauty.

EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

This new body of work expands on Ando's recent series of paintings exploring clouds at dusk, including *Tasogare (Twilight)* and *Yuugure (Evening)*, which were showcased in her 2022 solo exhibition at Sundaram Tagore New York.

To create the works on view in Singapore, Ando started with her own photographs. "I take photographs of clouds all the time, wherever I am," she says. "I write down the exact place and time of the photograph, so in a way, the images are a chronicle of my own existence and a vector of time and space."

Ando deployed watercolor-like techniques as well as printing techniques to layer translucent washes of ink and pigment mixed with urethane on metal canvases. For some works, she applied up to twenty thin layers to manipulate the coloration and create depth in the painting. Leaving some areas bare, she allowed the metal surface to reflect and refract light amid passages of muted color to suggest a sense of movement.

Through form and color, Ando evokes the sublime, ephemeral nature of clouds and captures a fleeting moment in time and space. The works, each titled with the precise time of day when and location where the artist observed them, are atmospheric and expressive. Depending on the quality of light under which they're viewed and the position of the viewer, the paintings will subtly shift in color and intensity.

The cloud series embodies the essential elements of Ando's long-standing practice: material exploration, cultural and historical references, deeply held reverence for nature; and a desire to offer viewers a visceral experience.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Miya Ando is a Japanese/American artist based in New York. Her art is rooted in the dialectic coexistence of Eastern and Western cultures through the lens of natural phenomena. Her work is part of many public collections such as: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn Harbor, NY; Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, NY; Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI; Luftmuseum, Amberg, Germany; Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, Scottsdale, AZ; Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA; The Museum of Art and History, Lancaster, CA, as well as in numerous private collections. Solo exhibitions of her work have been presented at the Bolinas Museum, Bolinas, CA; the Asia Society Museum, Houston, TX; the Noguchi Museum, New York, NY; Savannah College Of Art and Design Museum, Savannah, GA; the Nassau County Museum, Roslyn Harbor, NY; and The American University Museum, Washington DC. Her work has been included in recent group exhibitions at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, LA; Haus Der Kunst, Munich, Germany; Bronx Museum, Bronx, NY; and Queens Museum of Art, Queens, NY. Ando has been the recipient of several grants and awards including the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant Award, and has produced several

public commissions, most notably a thirty-foot-tall sculpture built from World Trade Center steel for Olympic Park in London to mark the ten-year anniversary of 9/11, for which she was nominated for a DARC Award in Best Light Art Installation. Ando was also commissioned to create artwork for the historic Philip Johnson Glass House, New Canaan, CT. Most recently, Ando received the 2023 Brookfield Place New York Annual Arts Commission. The site-specific commission *Flower Atlas Calendar* premiered at the Winter Garden in Brookfield Place, New York, NY in July 2023. The artist holds a bachelor's degree in East Asian Studies from the University of California, Berkeley, studied East Asian Studies at Yale University and apprenticed with a Master Metalsmith in Japan.