



tomie ohtake: at her fingertips

galeria nara roesler | new york

opening

november 1st, 2018
6pm-8pm

exhibition

november 2 - december 22, 2018
tue-sat: 10am - 6pm

galeria nara roesler | new york

22 east 69th street 3r
new york ny 10021 usa
t 1 (212) 794 5038

Galeria Nara Roesler | New York is pleased to present a new chapter of the acclaimed exhibition *Tomie Ohtake: At Her Fingertips*, curated by Instituto Tomie Ohtake Chief Curator Paulo Miyada. Organized by Miyada especially for the New York gallery and including paintings, studies, engravings and photographs, this concise exhibition draws on the rich body of work created by Ohtake in the 1960s and 70s, as well as the artist's own rarely-seen documentation of her process. The exhibition shares its theme with presentations of *Tomie Ohtake: At Her Fingertips* at Galeria Nara Roesler | São Paulo (August - September 2017) and Galeria Nara Roesler | Rio de Janeiro (February - March 2018), offering a unique focus on the development of the artist's compositions from cut magazine collages to oil on canvas.

Tomie Ohtake is a monumental figure in the history of Brazilian abstraction. Her dedicated exploration of the formal, temporal, and spiritual aspects of color, shape, and gesture resulted in an extraordinary body of work spanning six decades. Born in 1913, she had a traditional upbringing in Kyoto and traveled to Brazil in

1936 to visit one of her brothers, who had been part of a large wave of Japanese immigration to the country. Unable to return to Japan because of the Second World War, Ohtake said that two factors were fundamental in her decision to settle permanently in Brazil: she was immediately enchanted by the country's unique tropical luminosity, and she realized that in Brazil she would have the opportunity to be an artist with creative freedoms she would be denied as a woman in Japan. After marrying and raising her two children, she dedicated herself to her work and became closely associated with the *Seibi* group, an informal network of Japanese-Brazilian artists united by an interest in abstraction. Yet she was also connected to wider groups of critics and artists, including Willys de Castro, Mário Pedrosa, Paulo Herkenhoff, and Mira Schendel among others. Her multiple affiliations and connections freed her from alignment with any one particular approach to art making and positioned her on a singular artistic path. It was Schendel, and Herkenhoff in particular, who encouraged the artist to more explicitly draw upon Japanese traditions, such as Zen Buddhism and calligraphy. In 1975 Ohtake stated: "My work is occidental, but it has great Japanese influence, a reflex of my upbringing. This influence lies in the search for synthesis: a few elements should say much. In haiku poetry, for example, one speaks of the world in seventeen syllables."

In the archival material stored by Ohtake in her studio-home, Paulo Miyada found notebooks of studies that were virtually unknown, containing small collages that reveal the artist's path to this synthesis in the 1960s and 70s. The delicate studies were created by ripping, cutting and pasting clippings of printed matter; magazines, invitations, newspapers, brochures. "By paying attention to the nature of Tomie Ohtake's process here we are granted access to the connections her painting has with chance, gesture and chromatic boldness," notes the curator. Miyada points out that miniature studies are a consistent and recurring resource employed in the artist's work up until the 1980s. "The found compositions served as the guidelines for paintings and engravings that experimented with different sizes and chromatic combinations. It is as if the drawing board with clippings of paper were a mining zone for shapes and color combinations," he adds. For her compositions in the 1960s, Tomie ripped pieces of paper to create the genesis of her paintings. "The figures, in this case, resemble simple geometric shapes, though with fuzzy contours; they hold the memory of having been ripped with the fingertips," the curator emphasizes. Then in the 1970s, when her paintings began to employ shapes with more defined contours, the studies also transformed, as the artist went on to utilize scissors – never ruler and razor – to cut the paper. "It was a way to address the instantaneousness of gesture and impregnate the entire painting process with this balance between happenstance and control." Furthermore, according to the curator, the textures of the paintings, surprisingly, are often times born out of the collage itself, appropriated from a variety of photographic materials. "The chromatic palette also expands, mirroring the chromaticism of an era that flirted with psychedelia."

About Tomie Ohtake

Tomie Ohtake was born in Kyoto, Japan in 1913 and lived in São Paulo, Brazil from 1936 until her death in early 2015. She began to work professionally as an artist only in her late 30s, immersing herself in an exploration of abstraction first in paint, and expanding into printmaking and sculpture in later years. Throughout her long and prolific career, she was the subject of numerous solo exhibitions, including several at Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo since her first in 1957; major exhibitions at the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; Barbican Centre, London; The Museum of Modern Art, Rio de Janeiro; and a retrospective at the Instituto Tomie Ohtake in São Paulo on the occasion of her 100th birthday, among many others. She has participated in numerous international biennial exhibitions, including Venice, Havana, Cuenca and eight editions of the São Paulo Bienal. Since the 1980s, Ohtake has produced several major public sculptures for cities and towns across Brazil, including iconic works throughout her hometown of São Paulo. In 2001, Instituto Tomie Ohtake opened its doors in São Paulo with a program dedicated to important exhibitions of contemporary art, architecture and design, and to preserving the artist's legacy. Tomie Ohtake's work is represented in permanent collections worldwide, including the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; M+, Hong Kong; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; MASP, Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand, São Paulo; MAM-SP, Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, São Paulo; MAM-RJ, Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro; MAC-USP, Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo; MAC-Niterói, Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Niterói, Niterói; Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection, Caracas; Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo; and Tate Gallery, London. Tomie Ohtake has been represented by Galeria Nara Roesler since its inception.

About Paulo Miyada

Paulo Miyada was born in São Paulo in 1985. He received his masters from the University of São Paulo's College of Architecture and Urbanism. Miyada is Chief Curator at Instituto Tomie Ohtake where he oversees the Curatorial and Research department. Exhibitions curated by Miyada at Instituto Tomie Ohtake include, *Cecily Brown – If Paradise Were Half as Nice* (2018), *Aprendendo com Dorival Caymmi: Civilização Praieira* and

Leda Catunda – I love you baby (2016). He has collaborated on many other exhibitions at Instituto, among them *Os Muitos e o Um* (2016), *Tomie Ohtake 100-101* (2015), *Nelson Felix: Verso* (2013), and the Arte Atual program (since 2013). In addition, he co-coordinates the course program at Escola Entrópica, where he teaches. Miyada was an assistant curator of the 29th São Paulo Bienal (2010) and was a member of the curatorial team for Itaú Cultural's Rumos Artes Visuais program (2011-2013), and the program's 2014 retrospective exhibition. He has curated group exhibitions including *A parte que não te pertence, Wiesbaden* (Kunsthau Wiesbaden, 2014), *É preciso confrontar as imagens vagas com os gestos claros*, and *Em direto* (Oficina Cultural Oswald de Andrade, 2011 and 2012). Miyada was also co-curator of the 34th Panorama da Arte Brasileira *Da pedra, da terra, daqui* (São Paulo Museum of Modern Art, 2015) and chiefcurator for the project *Estou cá* (Sesc Belenzinho, 2016).

Image

Tomie Ohtake in her studio, circa 1980s
archival photograph
2.3 x 7.2 in

press inquiries

galeria nara roesler | new york
t 1 (212) 794 5038
paul richert-garcia
paul@nararoesler.art

galeria nara roesler | são paulo
t 55 (11) 2039 5465
paula plee
paula.plee@nararoesler.art