
tomie ohtake: visible persistence

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Tomie Ohtake, *Untitled*, oil paint on canvas, 1961. Photo: Flávio Freire.

Nara Roesler New York is proud to announce *Tomie Ohtake: Visible Persistence* a solo exhibition by artist Tomie Ohtake (b. 1913, in Kyoto, Japan-d. 2015, in São Paulo, Brazil), curated by Luis Pérez-Oramas. The show proposes a selection of key works, embracing over 50 years of production, which together punctuate the defining phases in the artist's career, offering a succinct retrospective of her oeuvre. The exhibition inaugurates on November 4th, remaining on view through December 23rd, 2021.

A paramount figure in Brazilian art during the second half of the 20th and the first decades of the 21st centuries, Tomie Ohtake is known for having produced one of the most compelling bodies of works in late modern art in the Americas, embracing painting, sculpture, print-making, drawing, collage, theater staging, and monumental civic-scaled works. After a seminal period under the influence of lyrical abstraction, her work developed into a daring investigation on the density of painting that contrasted vis-à-vis the constructive-geometric and rational concrete art trending in Brazil during the 1950s and 1960s. Ohtake produced paintings featuring rich textural surfaces, notably made while blinding her eyes. These striking 'blind paintings' are of monumental historical significance in the Americas as they emphasize a corporeal density, contrasting against the backdrop of schematic concrete art, and proposing a bold phenomenological standpoint that stresses the whole human body—and not only its eyes—at the root of visual art. During the 1970s and 1980s, Ohtake produced an extraordinary series of paintings featuring a color-field, organic-driven figural version of abstraction. These works, exceptional for their beauty and masterful execution,

and a peak within that period, can be linked to the whole tradition of vernacular modernism that took place in Brazil starting in the 1920s with the work of artists such as Tarsila do Amaral and Emiliano di Cavalcanti. Drawing from her Japanese upbringing and her understanding of visual art as a topological experience, she later pursued her work as a painter, theater-stage designer, and sculptor, which beautifully manifested in her late tubular structures and paintings of impeccable textural whiteness, created as she was approaching 102 years old.

With works pertaining to each of these fundamental periods, *Tomie Ohtake: Visible Persistence* foregrounds the marked phases of the artist's career, celebrating every stage in its distinction, but also stressing Ohtake's drive to capture the density of space, color as a generative field, and the corporal experience of form. As one of Brazil's most significant artists of her time, Ohtake attained outstanding institutional acclaim in the country, and more recently has received significant recognition worldwide, notably joining the permanent collections of the Dallas Museum of Art, in Dallas/TX (2019), the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York/NY (2017), the M+ Collection, in Hong Kong (2017), and the Tate, in London (2016). Furthering the gallery's continuous effort to expand the artist's international presence, Nara Roesler presents *Tomie Ohtake: Visible Persistence* as an opportunity to consolidate the US public's awareness of this artist's truly unique legacy.

Tomie Ohtake was born in Kyoto in 1913 and moved to Brazil in 1936. Her career as an artist began at the age of 37 when she became a member of the Seibi group, which brought together artists of Japanese descent. In the late 1950s, when she left behind an initial phase of figurative studies in painting, she immersed herself in abstract explorations. In this phase, she performed a series of paintings which became known as blind paintings, where she would blindfold herself in experiments that challenged the ideas which grounded the Brazilian Neo-concrete movement, also bringing sensibility and intuition to the fore of her practice.

In 1957, invited by critic Mário Pedrosa, she presented her first solo exhibition at the Museu de Arte Moderna in São Paulo, which was followed by her participation in the São Paulo Biennial in 1961. Ohtake began to experiment with various printmaking methods during the 1970s and, beginning in the late 1980s, she undertook large-scale sculptural projects and public works in São Paulo and neighboring cities. Having worked until very late in life, Tomie Ohtake passed away in 2015, when she was 101 years old.

Nara Roesler is a leading Brazilian contemporary art gallery, representing seminal Brazilian and international artists who emerged in the 1950s as well as preeminent mid-career and emerging artists who dialogue with the currents put forth by these historical figures. Founded by Nara Roesler in 1989, the gallery has consistently fomented curatorial practice while upholding the utmost quality in art production. This has actively been put into practice through a select and rigorous exhibitions program created in close collaboration with its artists; the implementation and fostering of the Roesler Curatorial Project, a platform for curatorial projects; and continued support to artists beyond the gallery space, working with institutions and curators in offsite shows. In 2012, the gallery doubled its São Paulo exhibition space, in 2014 it expanded to Rio, and in 2015 it opened in New York City, continuing its mission to provide the best platform for its artists to show their work.

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