

tomie ohtake**the ultimate works**

curated by luis pérez-oramas

nara roesler new york**opening** september 10, 6–8pm**exhibition** sep–oct, 2026Tomie Ohtake, *Untitled*, 2014 [detail]

Nara Roesler New York is pleased to present *Tomie Ohtake: The Ultimate Works*. Curated by Luis Pérez-Oramas, the exhibition brings together a series of white works produced during the later years of the artist's life and works from her "blind paintings" series. "It is these two dialectical poles—the blackness of closed eyes that led Tomie toward some of her earliest white paintings and the blind whiteness of her final work—that this exhibition seeks to bring together, tying the artistic and vital thread of the artist's life, her earliest works and those produced in her later years," writes Pérez-Oramas.

Born in Kyoto in 1913, Tomie Ohtake moved to Brazil in 1936 and began painting in the 1950s under the guidance of Japanese artist Keiya Sugano. After an initial period devoted

to figurative studies, she turned to abstraction. Between 1960 and 1963, she created the works that would become known as "blind paintings." The experiment, suggested by critic Mário Pedrosa, consisted of painting while blindfolded, giving greater scope to intuition and sensitivity during the creative process."

In the 1970s and 1980s, Ohtake developed a visual language characterized by organic forms, monochromatic fields, and subtle color gradations, which would later extend to sculpture and public spaces. Throughout her career, she participated in twenty international biennials, including six editions of the São Paulo Biennial, where she received the Itamaraty Award, as well as the Venice, Tokyo, Havana, and Cuenca biennials. Her work is included in collections such as the Museum of Modern Art

(MoMA), the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Tate Modern, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and M+.

The Ultimate Works revisits the “blind paintings” to establish a fundamental connection between two distant moments in Ohtake’s body of work. While in her early works the artist begins with the “darkness” of covered eyes in search of a new form of visibility, in her later paintings she arrives at dense, opaque white fields. For Pérez-Oramas, “that initiatory and “Zen” darkness of vision, the voluntary blindness in search of a new visibility arising from the entire body rather than from the eyes alone, reaches its culmination at the end of the artist’s life in the absolute white of her final paintings and sculptures. In this sense, these works are not merely “ultimate” chronologically; they also possess a recapitulative power, an “ultimacy” in which the entirety of a century-spanning body of work comes to be synthesized in a kind of chromatic “kenosis,” a becoming-nothing—or only white—in order to become everything: ultimate fields for ultimate lines”.

In the white paintings, layers of paint overlap and accumulate, creating thicknesses that make the forms emerge from the surface. Viewed from a distance, the works appear as monochromatic fields; up close, they reveal reliefs. The brushstroke, rather than remaining merely a mark on the surface, creates relief and casts shadows onto the painting itself, revealing its almost sculptural dimension: the color thickens, concentrates, and, ultimately, seems to contain all colors and none of them at the same time.

The gesture that runs through these canvases also takes on a three-dimensional dimension in the sculptures presented in the exhibition. Crafted from white tubular steel, they bring into the space the movement previously inscribed on the surface of the painting. Their organic forms twist and intertwine, creating the impression of a thread suspended in the air. The tubular structure creates varying effects of light and shadow, as if it were possible to physically grasp the brushstroke itself. The movement winds through the exhibition space and maintains, in three dimensions, the continuity of the painterly gesture.

In these works from the latest year of her life, Tomie Ohtake reaches one of the most consistent moments of her entire

career. The shades of black associated with the voluntary blindness of her early career ultimately meet the white of her canvases and sculptures. Between these two extremes, the exhibition invites viewers to interpret Tomie Ohtake’s career as a continuous exploration of the limits of perception.

about nara roesler

Over the course of her career—which began in Recife in 1976—Nara Roesler has become one of Brazil’s leading gallerists, recognized for playing a key role in the promotion, institutional advancement, and internationalization of Brazilian art. Nara Roesler has contributed significantly to the development of her artists’ careers, providing sustained support and prominent platforms for presenting their work, while facilitating their inclusion in major institutions and significant private collections in Brazil and abroad. Today, Nara Roesler represents more than 50 artists and is positioned as one of the leading platforms for Brazilian art on the global circuit. Its program brings together historic and foundational figures in Brazilian and international art, including Abraham Palatnik, Amelia Toledo, Antonio Dias, Artur Lescher, Daniel Buren, Heinz Mack, Jac Leirner, Julio Le Parc, Sheila Hicks, Tomie Ohtake, and Vik Muniz; a younger generation of established artists, including Alberto Pitta, André Griffo, Berna Reale, Bruno Dunley, Jonathas de Andrade, JR, and Lucia Koch; as well as more recent names such as Asuka Anastacia Ogawa, Elian Almeida, Flávia Ventura, Jaime Lauriano, Manoela Medeiros, Mônica Ventura, and Thiago Barbalho.

Her first contemporary art exhibition, *O desenho em Pernambuco*, took place in Recife in 1976. In 1986, Nara Roesler moved to São Paulo, where she established the gallery under her own name in the late 1980s. Based in São Paulo, where it doubled the size of its space in Jardim Europa, the gallery expanded its program to Rio de Janeiro in 2014 and opened a space in New York in 2016, becoming the first Brazilian gallery to establish a location abroad and reaffirming its commitment to the global circulation of Brazilian and Latin American artistic production through an approach that combines long-term support, curatorial dialogue, and international positioning.

With the aim of continuously fostering curatorial practice and critical research, Nara Roesler created Roesler Hotel in 2004, a program dedicated to fostering exchange among curators

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and Brazilian and international artists. In 2011, the gallery established Nara Roesler Books, its publishing house dedicated to contemporary art, which has published more than 30 titles to date. Since 2019, the gallery's artistic direction has been led by Luis Pérez-Oramas, in dialogue with Nara Roesler's curatorial department, strengthening a program that combines curatorial rigor, institutional thinking, and an international presence.

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