

Yayoi Kusama | Bronze Pumpkins

Victoria Miro, 16 Wharf Road, London N1 7RW
16 September - 19 December 2014



Yayoi Kusama, *Pumpkin (M)*, 2014

Victoria Miro is delighted to present a new body of sculptures by Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama dedicated to her iconic depiction of pumpkins.

The exhibition comprises a major new series of bronze sculptures on display in the gallery's unique water garden. The bronze pumpkins have been two years in the making and mark the first time the artist has worked with bronze on such a large scale.

Since her earliest formative years, in a family who made their living cultivating plant seeds, Kusama has been fascinated by the natural world. She has always had an affinity with nature, particularly vegetal and floral life, but the pumpkin continues to occupy a special place in her iconography and is a motif she has returned to repeatedly throughout her career.

The plant appears in some of her paintings and works on paper as early as 1948. After her return from New York to Japan in the 1970s she rediscovered the theme, and began making serial works depicting the pumpkin in various media: paintings; prints; sculpture; installation; and environmental works. She has made tiny pumpkins no bigger than a key ring, and monumental pumpkins that dwarf the viewer with their scale. She has placed pumpkins in box structures and in mirror rooms, and used the distinctive knobby patterning of their skins as inspiration for her unique dot-patterned paintings and textiles. In 1993 pumpkins formed part of her presentation in the Japanese Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. In 1994 her iconic exterior sculpture of a large yellow and black pumpkin was sited at the Benesse Art Site Naoshima, an island in Japan's inland sea dedicated to displaying art within nature.

The artist has a strong personal identification with the pumpkin, and has described her images of them as a form of self-portraiture. She admires pumpkins for their hardiness and everyday quality, as well as for their unique and pleasing physical qualities. She has written:

“‘Pumpkin head’ was an epithet used to disparage ugly, ignorant men, and the phrase ‘Put eyes and a nose on a pumpkin’ evoked a pudgy and unattractive woman. It seems that pumpkins do not inspire much respect. But I was enchanted by their charming and winsome form. What appealed to me most was the pumpkin’s generous unpretentiousness. That and its solid spiritual base” (Yayoi Kusama, *Infinity Net: The Autobiography of Yayoi Kusama*, trans. Ralph McCarthy, London 2011, p.76).

Notes to Editors

Kusama's work is currently the subject of three major international museum exhibitions. Yayoi Kusama: A Dream I Dreamed is a solo exhibition of over 100 recent works travelling through Asia, first displayed at the Daegu Art Museum in Korea, followed by the Museum of Contemporary Art Shanghai, then Seoul Arts Center. It will tour through 2015 to venues including the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Art; the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung and National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi.

Yayoi Kusama: Infinite Obsession tours Central and South America throughout 2015. Consisting of over 100 works created between 1950 and 2013, the exhibition opened in June 2013 at Malba – Fundación Costantini, Buenos Aires—setting a new record attendance for the museum—and then travelled to the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro; the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Brasília and Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo, and recently opened at the Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City.

Travelling to various venues in Japan, the tour of Yayoi Kusama: Eternity of Eternal Eternity began in January 2012. In 2014 the exhibition travelled to Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto; Akita Senshu Museum of Art and opens this month at Matsuzakaya Museum, Aichi.

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