

Art Basel

Booth R7, 14–17 June 2018



Yayoi Kusama, *SELF-PORTRAIT BELROS*, 2010
Acrylic on canvas
162 x 130 cm, 63 3/4 x 51 1/8 in
© Yayoi Kusama, courtesy Ota Fine Arts, Tokyo/Singapore/Shanghai
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Victoria Miro is delighted to participate in Art Basel (Booth R7) with a three-person presentation of works by artists who will have exhibitions as part of the gallery's summer and autumn programme: Yayoi Kusama, Sarah Sze and Adriana Varejão.

Ahead of the gallery's major exhibition of new and recent work by **Yayoi Kusama** (3 October–21 December 2018), the Basel presentation will feature paintings and sculpture by the artist, including a number of works from Kusama's iconic *My Eternal Soul* series of paintings. Speaking about *My Eternal Soul*, Kusama has commented that 'The paintings are filled with an overflowing abundance of ideas that just keep bubbling up inside my mind.' Each painting abounds with imagery including eyes, faces in profile and other more indeterminate forms recalling cell structures, often in pulsating combinations of colour. Connotations of generation and growth are evident in *IN THE SPRING SUN*, 2009, where a fringed border in black contains eyes, profiles and biomorphs in red and black against a fiery expanse of yellow. The mood of *THE SEASON CAME WITH TEARS*, 2015, its vibrant palette of green and orange creating a forceful energy, is tempered by its melancholic title. Among the most existential of the *My Eternal Soul* paintings, *LIGHTS OF THE HEART*, 2016, contains at its centre a bright white square, while *AND LOVE IS FOREVER, SO I SAY IN MY SELF-PORTRAIT*, 2009, reveals Kusama's ongoing interest with proliferation and repetition of image and self-image. Kusama's art is inextricably linked to ideas of self-identity, and notions of the individual and aggregate. Vibrant and psychedelic, *SELF-PORTRAIT BELROS*, 2010, sees the artist create a self-portrait with dizzying intensity of form and colour, with no part of the composition left un contemplated.

The pumpkin form has been a recurring motif in Kusama's art since the late 1940s. Coming from a family that made its living cultivating plant seeds, Kusama was familiar with the kabocha squash in the fields that surrounded her childhood home. Writing about the significance of pumpkins in her 2011 book *Infinity Net: the Autobiography of Yayoi Kusama*, the artist notes: '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 balance. On display, *Pumpkin*, 2009, is completed in a signature palette of yellow and black, its curvaceous form adorned with an optical pattern of tapering black dots that create a sophisticated geometry. It is cast in highly durable fibreglass-reinforced plastic, then painted in urethane to glossy perfection,

and integrates many key aspects of Kusama's practice: the repeating pattern of dots, connotations of growth and fertility and a palette of singular vibrancy.

Like pumpkins, flowers have long been an important part of Kusama's oeuvre and reflect the dualism between the natural and the organic found throughout her art. Sharing the artist's distinctive bold palette, a large-scale flower sculpture, *Flowers That Bloom Tomorrow L*, 2010, also cast in fibreglass-reinforced plastic and painted in glossy urethane, straddles a bountiful line between nature and exuberant artifice.

The presentation will also feature an example of the artist's iconic *Infinity Nets* canvases. Forging a path between abstract expressionism and minimalism, Kusama first showed her *Infinity Nets* in New York in the late 1950s to critical acclaim; the work was also championed by the first wave of Minimalist artists such as Donald Judd and Frank Stella. Kusama continues to develop their possibilities in monochromatic works, such as *INFINITY-NETS [AEOP]*, 2015, a fluctuating veil of red that traverses a darker ground.

Sarah Sze will debut a new work from the first iteration of her project, *Afterimage*, which explores how images function as tools to make sense of the world. Comprised of multiple layers of paint, ink, paper, pencil, prints, objects, and wood, this new body of work both re-frames and refracts the collision of images we are confronted with daily. The title, referring to the effect where an image continues to appear in our vision after exposure to the original image has ceased, also alludes to the filmic idea of the persistence of vision, where the afterimage fills in the gaps between film frames, setting still images into motion in our perception and memory.

Afterimage replicates aspects of the artist's studio and includes images collected, gathered and discarded in the process of making the work. As such, each work becomes a place of experimentation, where ideas in their conception are mapped out to create images. Traces of multiple image-making mediums are layered in the work, such as the ghost images of etching, the skidding surface of silkscreen printing, the layering cuts of collage, the dripping and brushing of paint, the exposure by light of photographs, the digital disturbance of computer processing, and the flickering movement of film. Constellations of images shift in scale, fade, disappear and re-emerge, creating a storyboard of how an image is burned into memory and persists over time. An installation of works from *Afterimage*, in addition to *Images in Debris*, 2018, the latest iteration of a major series of sculptures that study the image in motion, will be at Victoria Miro, Wharf Road (8 June–28 July 2018).

On view for the first time at Art Basel, new *Saunas and Baths* paintings by the renowned Brazilian artist **Adriana Varejão** refer to details of public baths in Budapest and also an abandoned swimming pool near Rio de Janeiro. While previous *Sauna* paintings represent idealised, near-monochromatic tiled interiors, these new works are painterly evocations of existing places of wellness, leisure and ablution. Relating to ideas such as asepsis, they are equally concerned with traditional painterly concerns and aspirations, such as the desire to capture in oil on canvas the transparency of water and endless modulations of light across its surface.

Writing about Varejão's *Sauna* paintings, curator Paulo Herkenhoff has commented that the space depicted in each work is 'made of planar dimensions deformed by perspective – squares become diamond-shaped, bands almost lines.' Amplifying such spatial and chromatic complexities, the new works on display include *Budapest II*, 2013-2018, in which light dances across the surface of a tiled pool, echoing its grid formation in the cool, blue shallows while fracturing into staccato, calligraphic marks where it falls across deeper, darker water. By contrast, *Budapest III*, 2018, whose tones err towards warmer shades of red and yellow, suggests the play of light at a different time of day – perhaps sunrise or sunset. Here, the abutting planes of tiles appear warped and distorted, as if by a person, unseen, moving towards or away from the viewer. An exhibition of new *Saunas and Baths* paintings by Adriana Varejão will take place at Victoria Miro Venice, 14 July–8 September 2018.

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