

TEFAF New York

Booth 330, 3–7 May 2019



Yayoi Kusama, *SOLITUDE OF THE EARTH* (detail), 1994
Mixed media, table, two chairs and cabinet
Courtesy Ota Fine Arts, Tokyo/Singapore/Shanghai
and Victoria Miro, London/Venice
© Yayoi Kusama

Victoria Miro is delighted to participate for the first time in TEFAF New York (Booth 330) with a presentation of works by Milton Avery, Enrico Castellani, Ilse D'Hollander, Yayoi Kusama, Alice Neel, Howardena Pindell and Robert Ryman. Diverse in form and content, the two- and three-dimensional works on view are united by the colour white. In addition, a white *Infinity Net* painting by Kusama will be on view as part of the fair's Creative Spaces programme.

Focusing on diverse uses of the colour white, the presentation, while encircling abstraction and figuration, Minimalism and the monochrome, brings to the fore qualities of materiality and light, texture and tonal contrast. Highlighted, too, in this focused display are white's symbolic and psychological connotations of purity, harmony, possibility and brilliance.

A subtle and inventive colourist, **Milton Avery** (1885–1965) was a master at using close harmonies of candescent white, pink and grey, often contrasting them with more saturate hues. *White Pitcher*, 1946, is the third and most accomplished of three paintings completed by the artist to feature the motif of a white jug (earlier canvases were completed in 1928 and 1929) and reveals a significant development of his work during the 1940s. This beautifully simple still life is close to monochrome, its flattened forms locked into a perfectly harmonious play of positive and negative space. Cool and tranquil, yet optimistic in mood, it evokes a sense of domestic serenity energised by the rotund curves of jug which, in turn are complemented by the undulating stems of the flowers contained within it.

One of the most influential Italian artists of the twentieth century, **Enrico Castellani** (1930–2017) was hailed by Donald Judd as the 'father of Minimalism'. A master of light, throughout his career Castellani exploited the ways in which painting could occupy three-dimensional space, through the development of monochrome reliefs and the ways in which ambient light and shadow effects activate the space in which they are installed. *Superficie Bianca*, 1980, is a significant example of his signature *Surfaces* series, its rhythmic indentations and protrusions creating a delicate topography that appears endlessly to change as the viewer moves in front of it.

In her short life, the Belgian artist **Ilse D'Hollander** (1968–1997) created an intelligent, sensual and highly resonant body of work. D'Hollander's paintings can be read as a series of accumulated impressions, adjustments and layerings – visual records of the artist's thought processes that capture, hold and, often, divert attention. Monochrome or near monochrome fields might be interrupted by blocks of colour; geometric volumes that read

as natural or manmade interventions. These in turn might be punctuated by streaks or strokes of paint – applied with a brush or sometimes the artist’s hands. *Untitled*, 1996, its white and off-white planes traversed by lines limned in blues and browns to denote a simple architecture, and *Untitled ‘Tweede Posing’ (Second Effort)*, 1996, which reads as an exterior view bisected by the tapering vertical of, perhaps, a tree trunk, reveal the quiet ambition of D’Hollander’s art, as well as her masterful command of graphic and painterly touch.

Works by **Yayoi Kusama** reflect the artist’s lifelong use of white, her preoccupation with the infinite and sublime, as well as the twin themes of cosmic infinity and personal obsession as found in pattern and repetition, which can be traced back to the hallucinations of multiplying dots and nets which she first experienced in her childhood. *SOLITUDE OF THE EARTH*, 1994, is an important installation comprising two white chairs, a table and a cabinet covered in objects and white netting. It evokes a fetishistic response to female paraphernalia and the trappings of domesticity, while echoing the labour-intensive work of stitching, sewing or knitting. Here, the idea of the net in Kusama’s art is made manifest, transcending the space of painting to enter the three-dimensional realm, where it both invites close scrutiny and intimates physical separation.

The presentation will also feature *INFINITY-NETS [PHBNQ]*, 2012, an example of **Kusama**’s iconic *Infinity Net* canvases, which is on view as part of TEFAF’s Creative Spaces. An enduring feature of Kusama’s unique art is the intricate lattice of paint that covers the surface of her *Infinity Net* canvases, the negative spaces between the individual loops of these all-over patterns emerging as delicate polka dots. These motifs have their roots in the hallucinations from which Kusama has suffered since childhood, in which the world appears to her to be covered with proliferating forms. Forging a path between Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism, Kusama first showed her white *Infinity Nets* in New York in the late 1950s to critical acclaim; the work was championed by the first wave of Minimalist artists such as Donald Judd and Frank Stella. Kusama continues to develop their possibilities in monochromatic works which are covered with rhythmically undulating meshes that seem to fluctuate and dissolve as the viewer moves in front of them.

The art of **Alice Neel** (1900–1984) is characterised by honesty. Alternating between sombre and vibrant colours, Neel’s application of paint could be hard-edged and broad as she addressed her subjects on canvas without preliminary sketches. The result of this direct approach is a body of work that preserves the spontaneity of initial ideas and the liveliness of the one-to-one encounter. *Purvis*, 1958, depicts a classmate of the artist’s younger son, Hartley, who was about seventeen years-old when he posed for this portrait. Unusually, the artist simply named the painting with her subject’s surname – perhaps echoing the way in which the boys referred to each other at school. Neel’s paintings of her sons and their friends during this period are touching images of young men on the cusp of adulthood. *Purvis*, in particular, seems to embody both the vulnerability of youth – his knees clasped firmly together, his arms cross and shoulders hunched beneath his white shirt – and the sophistication of nascent manhood, accentuated by the manner in which he holds a cigarette. It is a work of subtle yet symphonic whiteness, with shirt, cigarette and *Purvis*’ eyes creating a dynamic interplay of light and shadow.

Howardena Pindell is celebrated for employing unconventional materials in her work and for rendering visible traces of labour, such as obsessively affixed dots of pigment and paper circles made with a hole punch, which signify wider, metaphorical processes of deconstruction and reconstruction. Collage has played a key role in Pindell’s art since the early 1970s, her engagement with the paper chads that result from the hole punch process emerging organically from the method of creating her spray paintings in the first years of that decade. These small circles of paper or card are incorporated into *Untitled*, 1975, a near monochrome work of sublime optical and textural complexity that reveals the extent of her formal analysis and material innovation during this period. In June, Victoria Miro will present an exhibition of recent works and large-scale paintings from the 1970s by Howardena Pindell, the gallery’s first presentation since announcing its representation of the artist, and Pindell’s first solo exhibition in the UK.

No presentation of works relating to the colour white would be complete without **Robert Ryman** (1930–2019), and *Untitled Prototype*, 1969, is a quintessential work by the master celebrated for his career-long focus on white, and different kinds of whiteness produced by various materials and support surfaces, brushes and brushstrokes. Characterised by economy and sureness, this painting embodies the way in which Ryman’s stringent, pragmatic Minimalism gives rise to infinite variety of tonalities and luminosities, qualities that change minute to minute, hour to hour in relation to the surrounding ambient light. Liberating painting from representational suggestion, Ryman’s art in turn frees us to concentrate on our own looking, an experience which, as Ryman said, should be ‘a kind of revelation’.

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