

Gallerist

Sadamasa Motonaga at McCaffrey Fine Art

By Andrew Russeth 1:45pm



START THE SLIDESHOW

Should you find yourself in the mood for a bit more abstract art after a visit to the Guggenheim's large and enlightening new survey "Art of Another Kind: International Abstraction and the Guggenheim, 1949–1960," let us strongly recommend the mile-long walk down to McCaffrey Fine Art, which is currently hosting eight works by Japanese artist Sadamasa Motonaga (1922–2011).

The two earliest paintings in the show are dated 1958, at the tail end of the Guggenheim's timeline. Then a member of Japan's Gutai movement, Motonaga poured paint—deep blue for one painting, deep red in the other—to make big, meaty pools slowly slid down the canvas to form a giant streak. At their densest sections they resemble blood, like Sam Francis at his burliest, and the gallery's news release compares them smartly to Morris Louis's Veil works, which are contemporaneous.

The later works are the real thrills here—in a piece from the 1960's, those single, sliding pools of color become shooting blobs that streak across the white canvas, leaving lush, almost watery trails in their wake. In the 1970's, Motonaga's art became increasingly psychedelic, hallucinogenic even—the earthier tones of previous years giving way to light blues and oranges in trippy, neon and pastel pitches. The Gutai splatter has been resolved into perfectly smooth edges, prefiguring something of Takashi Murakami's Superflat technique.

Though Motonaga is not included in "Art of Another Kind," the Guggenheim show, the exhibit at McCaffrey marks the artist's first solo New York outing since 1961 (at Martha Jackson, just a block away from McCaffrey), and provides a nice look forward at the developments that followed those of the artists included in that exhibition and offers a tantalizing preview of another Guggenheim show, the Gutai retrospective, which will arrive in February and features his work.