

Natsuyuki Nakanishi

May 6 – July 11, 2014

Fergus McCaffrey is pleased to announce its inaugural show at its new location at 514 West 26th Street. We are honored to present the first solo exhibition in the United States of Natsuyuki Nakanishi, one of the most important artists working in the post-war period in Japan.

Nakanishi's career as an artist spans over 50 years and his investigations, which began with his series of *Rhyme* paintings in 1959, have consistently addressed philosophical and aesthetic issues pertaining to painting and performance. His analytical and experimental thinking have resulted in a radical reconfiguration of the terms of art-making.

Nakanishi was born in 1935 and grew up in Tokyo, where he attended Tokyo National University of Arts and Music. He began his career as a painter and has consistently and persistently explored that medium. The textural quality of his early works, such as *Map of Human*, made up of paint, enamel, and sand, evoke a sense of the ancient, while at the same time suggesting contemporary concepts of cell structure and DNA paths. Structural topological elements also make themselves felt in his *Rhyme* series from 1960. Cast off elements from the everyday, such as string and cotton, or even shirts, make their way into these works, and are particularly evident in *Rhyme S'*, 1960. The materiality of such compositions are in keeping with developments in international art of the period, such as that of Robert Ryman and Piero Manzoni.

The use of banal objects from everyday life eventually gave way to Nakanishi's *Compact Objects*. The egg-shape resin sculptures captured mundane objects — a sneaker, a broken watch, a mirror, rusted gears — placing a kind of fossilized human detritus at the center of the work. These objects were an integral part of *Yamanote Line Festival* (1962), an early precursor to the actions of Hi Red Center. With Genpei Akasegawa and Jiro Takamatsu, Nakanishi staged numerous "Happenings" throughout Tokyo, such as *Street Cleaning Event*, 1964.

Nakanishi's interest in theater and his involvement in set design and art direction for Butoh dancers Tatsumi Hijikata and Ushio Amagatsu, further affected his thinking, influencing his installation of his paintings. In his most recent painting, he uses easels to display his work, allowing for an exploration of the relationship between the paintings and their surroundings, which become much like actors on stage. The experiential aspect of these works is felt not only in the physical process of walking around the works, the experience of which changes from space to space, but also in the perception of color. Using primarily white and purple on raw linen canvas, Nakanishi creates a lyrical and sensual landscape of their own. The creation of these works also happens sequentially, one painting leading into the next by shifting the ground, so that positive becomes negative. This sense of time and of interaction is central to the contemplative philosophical underpinning of the work.

Nakanishi has exhibited extensively and his museum solo exhibitions include: Kitakyushu Municipal Museum of Art (1985), Seibu Museum (1989), Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art (1995/2002-03), Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo (1997), Kawamura Memorial DIC Museum of Art (2004/2012), and The Shoto Museum of Art (2008). His works were also included in numerous notable group exhibitions, including *Japanese Art After 1945: Scream against the Sky*, Yokohama Museum of Art, Guggenheim Soho, and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (1994); and *Tokyo 1955-1970*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2013).