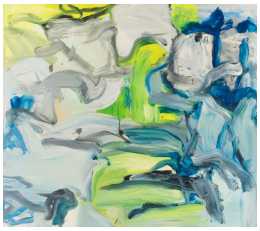
Fergus McCaffrey

De Kooning / Shiraga

Presented in collaboration with Mnuchin Gallery
February 15 – April 2, 2022

Fergus McCaffrey, in collaboration with Mnuchin Gallery, is proud to announce *de Kooning / Shiraga.* The exhibition marks the first time these two masters of postwar abstraction will be shown side-by-side. On view from February 15 through April 2, 2022 at Mnuchin Gallery, the exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue authored by esteemed art historian Pepe Karmel.



The history of postwar abstraction has long centered around discussions of the American movement of Abstract Expressionism. While the innovations made by artists of the New York School, including Willem de Kooning (1904–1997) are well known, a recent turn towards the expansion of the art historical canon has made it plain that the phenomenon of gestural abstraction was not strictly an American framework. Indeed, a further look afield shows that, in the period following World War II, various styles and conceptions of abstraction were quickly pouring out of artists around the world. Willem de Kooning was, of course, one of the leading figures of this charge in America. Kazuo Shiraga (1924–2008) was similarly one of the foremost abstract painters in Japan and a leader of the Gutai movement, achieving wide success in his home country and in Europe.

Although the two occupied preeminent positions in their respective circles, and within postwar abstraction more broadly, they were never formally acquainted with one another. Despite this, a retrospective look at their oeuvres shows two periods of stylistic overlap: the first occurring between 1955 and 1963/64, and the second beginning in the early 1970s. *De Kooning / Shiraga* takes as its point of departure, this second period of commonality, examining how each artist moved out of a period of creative indirection and experimentation towards stunning late periods that, in many ways, act as summations of their historical achievements. The exhibition likewise highlights a period for both artists that have come to encompass some of their most revered works, although they may still be lesser known historically than their earlier phases.

Across both floors of Mnuchin Gallery, the exhibition will present important masterworks by both artists compiled from some of the most notable private collections around the world. Eight works by de Kooning dating from 1975–1983, and eleven canvases by Kazuo Shiraga from the period of 1973–1997 will be juxtaposed, illustrating the ways in which they organically arrived at some of the same aesthetic considerations and conceptual influences, and the ways in which their practices remain distinctly their own.

Please note: the exhibition will take place at Mnuchin Gallery (45 East 78th Street, New York).

For press inquiries, please contact:

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Images: 1. Willem de Kooning, *Untitled III,* 1978. Oil on canvas, 76 5/8 x 87 3/8 inches (194.6 x 221.9 cm) © 2022 The Willem de Kooning Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; 2. Kazuo Shiraga, *Funryu [Jetstream],* 1973. Alkyd paint on canvas, 71 5/8 x 89 3/8 inches (191.9 x 227 cm) © Estate of Kazuo Shiraga. The George Economou Collection, Athens