

ROBERT KOBAYASHI



Selected Chronology

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Published by Moe's Meat Market, a gallery
Principals: Kate Keller Kobayashi and Phyllis Stigliano
237 Elizabeth Street
New York, New York 11217 USA
Phone: 212.343.2785

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Chronology researched and prepared: Phyllis Stigliano
Phyllis Stigliano Art Projects | www.phyllisstigliano.com

Unless otherwise indicated, all photographs: Kate Keller Kobayashi

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Cover: Robert Kobayashi in his studio, NYC, 1984

Moe's Meat Market, a gallery



Robert Hiroshi Kobayashi, circa 1926

1925

Birth of Robert Hiroshi Kobayashi on 5 May in Honolulu, Territory of Hawaii. He is the son of Florence (Yoshimi Kusaka) Kobayashi, born in Japan, 1898-1994, and Hiroshi Kobayashi born in Honolulu of Japanese descent. His father was employed at the post office and left his family when all were very young.

1930's - 1940's

Lives on Liona Lane (now Liona Street), Honolulu, with his mother and four sisters – oldest Betty, Peggy (Fumi) whom he develops a life-long bond, Ruby, and youngest sister Lillian. Attends Ka'ahumanu Elementary School, Honolulu. He remembers drawing cartoons as a child.



Certificate from Honolulu School of Art, 1948



Robert Kobayashi with his four sisters in Honolulu, circa early 1930's

Graduates from Washington Intermediate School, Honolulu 1940. When he begins hanging out in pool rooms in Honolulu - Fumi advises him to read books - Ulysses by James Joyce, Albert Camus, and others; becomes an avid reader throughout his life. Graduates McKinley High School, Honolulu 1944. Joins the United States Army, Schofield Barracks, Honolulu. Trains at Camp Livingston, Louisiana, 14 May-8 September 1945. Deploys to Germany for two years at end of WWII and serves in Company C, 778th Tank Battalion, until 14 December 1946 with honorable discharge. Receives four medal citations. While on leave from the military in Louisiana in 1945, visits the Art Institute of Chicago - impressed with artwork of Paul Gauguin, and especially Georges Seurat's painting, *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte*, exemplary of Pointillism that influences his later neo-Pointillist paintings. His sister Fumi attends Barnard College, NYC, and encourages him to pursue a career in fine art on his return to Honolulu. Under the GI Bill completes a formal art education in 1948 with a two year course at Honolulu School of Art under Willson Stamper, Director of the Art School.

Begins his art career in Honolulu as an abstract painter - he finds Abstract Expressionism exciting. In 1948, first exhibits in *20th Annual Honolulu Artists Exhibition* sponsored by the Association of Honolulu Artists and held at the Honolulu Academy of Arts 2-21 March - his oil painting *The Reader* is awarded the Jon and Eleanor Freitas prize for best painting by an Island-born artist exhibiting for the first time; Willson Stamper awarded grand prize.

1949 - 1952

Moves to NYC to seriously continue his art education - under GI Bill studies at Brooklyn Museum Art School, Brooklyn, NY - painting with John Ferren 1949-1951; and



Painting *The Reader* wins Jon and Eleanor Freitas Award, Honolulu Star-Advertiser, Sunday, 21 March 1948



Left to right: fellow students Keichi and Sueko Kimura, painting instructor John Ferren and Robert Kobayashi at Brooklyn Museum Art School, NY, © Brooklyn Museum Archives, Records of the Brooklyn Museum Art School: Visual materials, Historical (1949-1950), Photo: Paul Weller

sculpture with John Hebald 1950-1951. Resides at 323 West 108th Street, NYC.

His sister Fumi works at the American Embassy in Paris; on her advice, he studies in Paris 1950 and lives at l'Hôtel de l'Académie, a hostel for artists at the time, located at 32, rue des Saints-Pères, Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Paris. Recollection of seeing Alberto Giacometti, Jean-Paul Sartre, Shinkichi Tajiri, and several



Robert (Boy) Kobayashi and niece Mei with his artwork at Honolulu Academy of Arts, 1952

European actors at café Les Deux Magots on boulevard Saint-Germain.

Early 1950's exhibits in several group shows – *23 New Painters Who Work with John Ferren at the Brooklyn Museum Art School*, Argent Gallery, NYC; *Fifteen Unknowns: Selected by Artists of the Kootz Gallery* (David Hare selects Robert Kobayashi's sculpture no. 1), Kootz Gallery, NYC; and *Artists of Hawaii*, Honolulu Academy of Arts, HI, 10-27 July 1952 – exhibits a sculpture and a painting.

1954 - 1955

Beginning of long-term employment at MoMA - The Museum of Modern Art, NYC. He helps with the installation and remains as gardener for the architectural exhibition, *Japanese Exhibition House*, 16 June-21 October 1954, 26 April-15 October 1955; a house by Japanese architect Junzo Yoshimura, shipped from Japan and re-built in the museum garden. He researches horticultural problems at a branch of New York Public Library across the street from MoMA. Exhibition sponsor is American-Japan Society of Arts, 1952



Fumi's friend Avital and Fumi at Notre Dame de Paris, circa 1950

in Tokyo and private citizens. Shofuso © 1955 YouTube: Shofuso, The Museum of Modern Art, NYC, a short documentary film shows Kobayashi raking/drawing sand designs in the outdoor garden.

Continues working at MoMA as gardener, then works under the registrar department in museum warehouse packing and crating art for travelling exhibitions until 1978 when he retires. Becomes friends with artist Nick Krushenick who works in the carpentry shop. Marries artist Nanae Momiyama - a painter, NYC, 1954. Birth of their first child Lola Haniwa, NYC, 1955.



Reconditioning the Japanese House in the Museum of Modern Art garden, Japanese Exhibition House show, 1954-1955 © MoMA



Boy Kobayashi with his painting and sculpture, Suva, 1957, circa 1957-1958

1956 - 1959

Known as Boy, exhibits in the Tenth Street artist-run co-operative galleries, NYC - Camino Gallery, 1956; an original member of Brata Gallery that opens 1957, 89 East Tenth Street, with founders Nicholas and John Krushenick, and others - his wife Nanae Momiyama who exhibits frequently and arranges Brata exchange exhibitions in Tokyo, Al Held, Ronald Bladen, George Sugarman, Salvatore Romano, and in 1959 Yayoi Kusama.



Nanae Momiyama and Robert Kobayashi with their daughters Anne Kesa and Lola Haniwa, circa 1960

Exhibits in Brata Gallery's inaugural group show October 1957; and a 3-person show Takeshi Asada, Boy Kobayashi, Nicholas Krushenick, February 1958 that receives review by Dore Ashton in *The New York Times*. Brata is one of few galleries that exhibits artists of color.

Article, "Abstraction," on Robert Kobayashi by Philip Hamburger, in "The Talk of the Town," *The New Yorker*, 9 August 1958.

Birth of second daughter Anne Kesa, NYC, 1958. Resides with family at 60 East 106th Street, NYC.

1958 - 1959

Receives an Opportunity Fellowship award \$2,500. from the John Hay Whitney Foundation, NYC.



Untitled, circa 1960, Private Collection

1960's - 1972

Death of his devoted sister Peggy (Fumi) in Honolulu 1960. Creates artworks in her honor throughout his career.

Takes time off from MoMA and lives and works in Tokyo and Honolulu 1960-1962 with his wife Nanae and both daughters; works at Honolulu's Board of Water Supply, Honolulu.



Robert (Boy) Kobayashi with his painting, Honolulu, 1961



Boy Kobayashi and friends at opening for 3-person show Brata Gallery, NYC, February, 1958



Robert (Kobi) in his studio 333 East 95th Street, NYC, May, 1970

First solo exhibition, *Paintings by Kobayashi*, large abstract expressionist paintings at Gima's Gallery, Honolulu, HI, 19 March-7 April 1962. Receives review by Clare Loring, "Kobayashi's Paintings, on Display At Gima's, Ablaze With Intensity," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*.

Returns to NYC - MoMA - The Museum of Modern Art 1962. Works in the registrar department in the museum warehouse division. Robert Kobayashi and Nanae Momiyama divorce.

Mid 1960's paints wooden boxes with surreal imagery.

In 1969, he meets Kate Keller who begins working at MoMA - The Museum of Modern Art, in the photography studio. Kate leaves MoMA May 1970 for California. Kobi writes letters to her every day until her return to MoMA. He lives at 333

East 95th Street, NYC. Exhibits regularly in The Art Lending Service at MoMA to Museum Penthouse, Time-Life Building, and United States Embassy Residence in Budapest, 1968-1973.

Participates in The Museum of Modern Art's strike August 1971; first museum strike in USA.

1972 - 1973

On Kate's return to MoMA November 1972, she becomes Head of the Fine Arts Photography and Photo Imaging Studio until she retires in 2002.

Kobi and Kate marry October 1973 in Maumee, Ohio.

Begins circa 1972 painting with oil on canvas using neo-Pointillist style through circa 1996. His work at this time includes small clouages and neo-



Museum News, June 1972

Pointillist paintings. With access to the carpentry shop at The Museum of Modern Art, NYC, Kobi begins his *clouage technique of hammering little nails into pieces of metal onto a wooden structure. His first clouage is a frame for a mirror that he makes at his wife's request, made



First clouage work - a frame for a mirror, 1973



Kobi and Kate on their honeymoon in Oahu, 1973; Photo: Norm Shapiro, Oahu, Hawaii

with cut pieces of various printed metals from Bazzini peanut cans, Kate's yellow photographic Kodak film cans, red Coke cans, red Savarin coffee cans, and other tins; followed by a white cat *Shiro*. They live at 64 West 84th Street, NYC.

1977

On 21 July 1977, Kobi and Kate purchase a new home, a building 237 Elizabeth Street, NYC, in Little Italy (now Nolita) formerly Moe's Meat Market since the 1920's. Kobi begins to set up amazing changing tableaux in the windows and the locked storefront that amuse neighbors and passers-by. Uses the East end of their second floor apartment as his studio.



Kobi's studio at 64 West 84th Street, NYC, circa 1973

1978 - 1984

Retires from The Museum of Modern Art, NYC, 1978. Creates *Thomas Cat Door* for their cat Macaroni; passers-by begin leaving messages in the mail slot. Begins using textured ceiling tin for sculptures of still-lives and figures; uses raw tin without color on several works. Art writer Michael Florescu terms Robert Kobayashi's technique, **clouage* (French verb clouer – to nail), in an article for solo show at Josef Gallery, NYC, in *Arts*, November 1981.



Tattooed Man, circa 1976, Private Collection

Solo exhibition, *Moe's Meat Market, Collage and Sculpture by Kobi*, at Equator Gallery, NYC, 1980; set up to resemble Moe's Meat Market storefront.

Alec Wilkinson writes unpublished article "Tin" on Robert Kobayashi for *The New Yorker*, 1983.

Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY, acquires oil painting, *The Brooklyn Bridge*, 1982, Gift of Marilyn and Ivan Karp, 1983.



21 July 1977 the day Kobi and Kate purchase 237 Elizabeth Street, NYC
Left to right: friends Tamar Head Losee, Tamar's friend, Monique Boudert, Adam Ross, Max Ross, Kate and Robert Kobayashi, Photo: Dave Allison



Window of Moe's Meat Market with cat Macaroni, circa 1982-1983



Kobi's studio on second floor apartment at 237 Elizabeth Street, NYC, circa 1978-1980



Prince Street, circa 1981, Private Collection



The Brooklyn Bridge, 1982, © Brooklyn Museum

Exhibits in group show *Red Dog Running: New Discoveries in 20th Century Folk and Outsider Art*, Ricco Johnson Gallery, NYC, 15 November-15 December 1984.

Represented by Nicholas F. Rizzo Fine Arts, Brooklyn, NY, 1981-1991; he organizes exhibition *Recent Sculpture* at Moe's Meat Market, 1984.

MoMA-The Museum of Modern Art, NYC, acquires sculpture, *Three Plums*, 1984, Gift of General Felt Industries, Knoll, 1984.

Oil paintings in neo-Pointillist style of interiors, still-lives, and surreal seascape; theme of angels appear for the first time and paints large works 1978-1984 – a few based on nursery rhymes – some destroyed.



Solo show at Equator Gallery, NYC, 1980



Thomas Cat Door at Moe's Meat Market, NYC



Invite for exhibition *Recent Sculpture* with *Triple Crown*, 1984

1985 - 1986

In 1985, The Prudential Insurance Company of America, Newark, NJ, acquires clouage, *Open Window*, 1981.

Completes Ionic Order Series, 1986 – architectural-like – abstract, frameless, metal wall pieces.

MoMA, NYC, exhibits his sculpture *Three Plums* in group shows.



Ionic Order #11, 1986

1987 - 1988

Birth of Kobi and Kate's daughter Misa Jane, NYC, 1987. Begins staged portraits with Misa at holidays. Takes care of Misa at home – makes toys for her – doll house, wooden dolls, puppet theatre, and puppets.

Major solo exhibition, *Tattooed Angel: Paintings & Sculpture by Robert Kobayashi*, at Nassau County Museum of Fine Art, Roslyn, NY, 1988, curators: Phyllis Stigliano and



Misa Jane Kobayashi, 1988

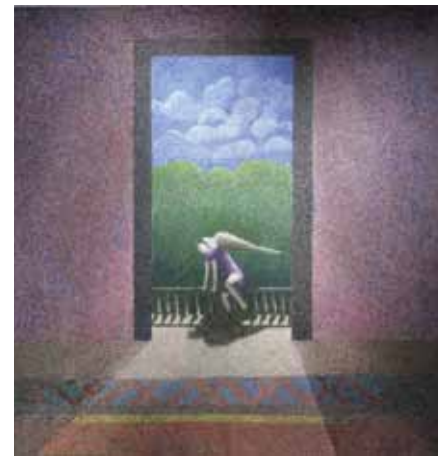


Installation of Three Plums, 1984, 1989 at The Museum of Modern Art, NYC © MoMA

Janice Parente; museum publishes catalog with Alec Wilkinson's essay, "Tin." Karin Lipson's review of show, "A Multimedia Mystery Man," *Newsday*; writes regarding some paintings, that they "...create a world of their own – one filled with mystery, with a quiet longing ..."

1989 - 1990's

Kobi uses the storefront as his studio until 2008. Completes six detailed building maquettes of Elizabeth Street, NYC, replicating intricate features: fire-escapes, railings, lace curtains, air conditioner; 237 is Moe's Meat Market his family's home, and their neighbors' buildings 230, 235,



Door to Balcony, 1984



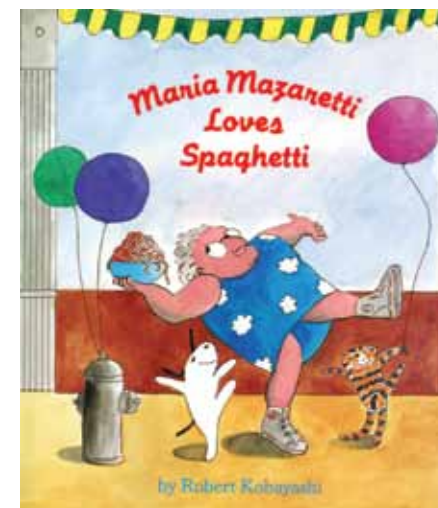
Installation Tattooed Angel at Nassau County Museum of Fine Art, Roslyn, NY, June 1988



Kobi and daughter Misa with his maquettes of 235, 237, 239, 241 Elizabeth Street buildings in the window, 1995, Photographer unknown, All rights reserved

239, 240, and 241. In 1990, storefront of Moe's Meat Market used as a gallery for two solo exhibitions for Robert Kobayashi, *Red Curtains*, February; and *Tin Flowers*, November, sponsored by Angel. Diversified Art Services - staff of Nassau County Museum of Fine Art.

Receives commission to write and illustrate a children's book, *Maria Mazaretti Loves Spaghetti*, with two short stories published by Alfred A. Knopf, NYC,



Children's book Maria Mazaretti Loves Spaghetti, 1991

1991, based on his neighbor and friend Mary Albanese, a butcher on Elizabeth Street. Continues writing and illustrating books with angels – in 1992, Kobayashi writes in a letter, "... Trying to write another child's book/it's about an angel dropping down on Elizabeth St. / and he's trying to get back up there with the help of the people.../... it's about Elizabeth St and the Elizabethans/..." Kobayashi finishes the story yet it remains unpublished.

Death of his mother in Honolulu 1994.

Kobayashi's graphic metal works evolve into more complicated and layered with abstract color shapes, delicate lineal aspects, and use of negative space. In 1997, begins large group of metal clouage works with frames that are separate but integral to each work. *Painted Fingernails*, 1999-2000, is one of first works where strips of painted tin wrap around the frame; along with *Piece of the Sky*, 2003.

Birth of first grandchild, Cameryn Jean, NYC, 1999, daughter of Dr. Martin and Haniwa Gottlieb.



Vase with Pears, 1997



Piece of the Sky, 2003

2000 - 2003

In 2000, Moe's Meat Market, 237 Elizabeth Street, NYC, opens as a gallery with Kate Keller Kobayashi and Phyllis Stigliano as principals. First show *Twelve Cut Petals*. They present on-going shows that feature the work of Robert Kobayashi in the middle room. After 9/11, proves to be a very productive period – creating series of reflective works – grass works with frames that are separate yet integral to each image, 2001-2003, sculptural floral bouquets 2000-2003.

Video documentary by Misa Kobayashi interviewing her father in Moe's Meat Market during the exhibition, *Moonflowers*, 2002-2003.



Robert Kobayashi in Moe's Meat Market, a gallery, before his solo exhibition Broadway Windows NYU, 2003

Exhibition, *Robert Kobayashi, Moonflowers*, presented at NYU Broadway Windows, 4 April-18 May 2003.

Birth of second granddaughter Tierra Kobayashi, NYC, 2003, daughter of Anne Kesa Kobayashi and Hiroshi Tamada.

2005 - 2006

Participates in group exhibition *Honolulu to New York* at The Contemporary Museum at First Hawaiian Center, Honolulu, 2005, curator Allison Wong. Completes a grass series of frameless clouages where the grass



Touchdown at Hilo, 2002



Bouquet on Tippy Toes, 2002, Collection Microsoft Art Collection

wraps around the edges. He refers to these works as "American landscapes - feeling of America." Completes a group of 14 metal boxes with lids all abstract patterns using printed and solid colors of tin.

2007

Microsoft Art Collection, Redmond, WA, acquires 3 works - two sculptures, *Bouquet on Tippy Toes*, 2002; *Weed Flowers From an Empty Lot*, 2002; and one metal wall work *Ernsthausen's Pond*, 2006, from the grass series.



Grumpa's studio - Kobi working in his storefront with his granddaughters Cameryn and Tierra, circa 2006

Exhibition, *Waiting for Misa*, at Moe's Meat Market, white wall works with frames that are separate but integral, and white sculpture *Inuit Bouquet*.



Waiting for Misa at Moe's Meat Market, 2007



Front room installation at Moe's Meat Market, 2008

2008

Moe's Meat Market, a gallery, re-opens the front gallery that features Robert Kobayashi's artwork. Inaugural exhibition, *Today (Aujourd'hui), New Work*, 26 October-31 December. Kobi uses a small section of his apartment as his studio.



Moe's Meat Market, a gallery, 2009

2009

Lily Koppel's article, "An Artist of the Street And Quiet Reticence," January, *The New York Times*.

Exhibits in group show, *Hawaii's Modern Masters: New York Reunion: Satoru Abe, Robert Kobayashi and Harry Tsuchidana*, at CHANEL, Waikiki, Honolulu, November.

Important video/interview by Joyce Okano with Robert Kobayashi at Moe's Meat Market, a gallery, 237 Elizabeth Street, NYC, with memories of his time living in Paris 1950.



Hawaii's Modern Masters, New York Reunion at CHANEL, Waikiki, HI, 2009
Left to right: Satoru Abe, Joyce Okano of CHANEL, Harry Tsuchidana and Robert Kobayashi



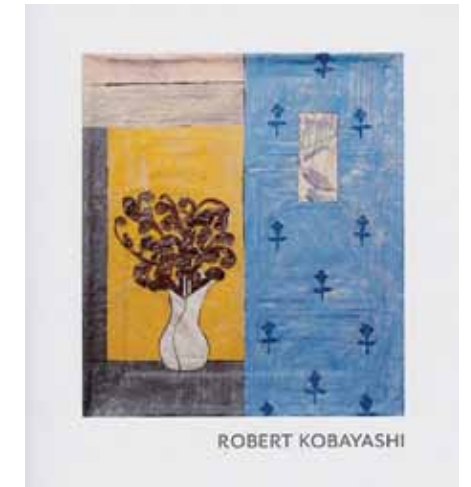
My Sister's Tsunami Plant, April 1, 1949, 2009, Collection The Honolulu Museum

2010

The Contemporary Museum, Honolulu, HI, acquires sculpture *My Sister's Tsunami Plant, April 1, 1949*, 2009; since its merging, it is Honolulu Museum of Art. The Oahu Country Club, Honolulu, HI, acquires metal wall work from the grass series, *Wailuku, Maui*, 2006-2007.



White on White, 2012



Cover of brochure Seeing and Being, 2011

2011

Jan Garden Castro writes statement, *Robert Kobayashi: Seeing and Being*, published in gallery brochure.

2012

White on White exhibition at Moe's Meat Market features white frameless works.



Hawaii's Modern Masters at CHANEL, Waikiki, 2014, Photo: Neil Sananikone

2014

Robert Kobayashi returns to Honolulu for health reasons.


Completes his last clouage work for his doctor, *Dr. Burke's Plant*, April 2014.

Exhibition, *City Angels*, at Moe's Meat Market, a gallery, with statement *The Angel at Elizabeth and Prince* by Garrett Buhl Robinson.

Exhibits in group show, *Hawaii's Modern Masters*, at CHANEL, Waikiki, Honolulu, November-December 2014.



Dr. Burke's Plant, 2014



Presented at
Moe's Meat Market, a gallery
 237 Elizabeth Street, New York 10012 USA

Happy 90th Birthday Kobi!

Please come for a piece of cake to celebrate Robert Kobayashi's 90th birthday
 Tuesday, 5 May, 1-6pm

7 March - 23 May 2015
 Hours: Wed. & Sat., 12-6pm
 By appointment: 512 359 3332

www.phyllisstigligiano.com

Robert Kobayashi,
 page 15, unpublished children's book,
 circa 1992, 18 sheets, watercolor and pencil on paper.

2015

Celebrates 90th birthday party on 5 May at Moe's Meat Market, a gallery; Kobi and Kate in Honolulu greet gallery visitors by facetime.

Robert Kobayashi dies at home in Honolulu on 14 December.

2016

Joyce Okano, John Koga, and H. Brian Moore organize a memorial exhibition of selected works at Pacific Guardian, Honolulu, for gathering of family and friends.



Kobi working in his studio, Alaula Way, Honolulu, 2015

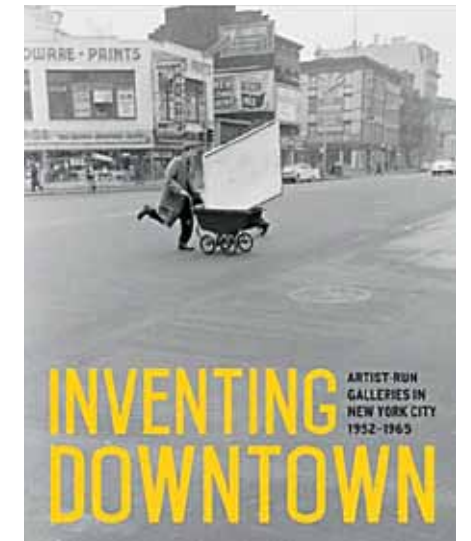
2017

Group exhibition, *Inventing Downtown, Artist-Run Galleries in New York City 1952-1965*, at Grey Art Gallery, New York University, NYC, January – April 2017, curator/author: Melissa Rachleff, with major publication. Travels to New York University Abu Dhabi Art Gallery.

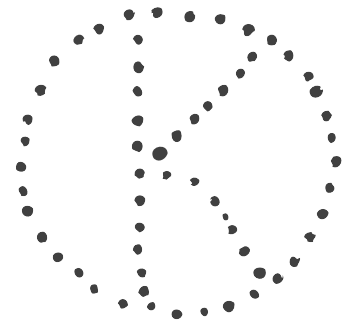
Essay, "Nailing It: The Life and Art of Robert Kobayashi," by Karin Lipson completed to be published.

Last exhibition, *Robert Kobayashi, Retrospective*, at Moe's Meat Market, a gallery.

After forty years of memorable installations and with grateful appreciation - Moe's Meat Market closes 7 October 2017. Moe's Meat Market will be moving to Brooklyn, New York.



Catalogue cover for *Inventing Downtown*, Grey Art Gallery, New York University



Moe's
Meat Market,
a gallery