



Susan Inglett Gallery is pleased to announce its representation of the Estate of Robert Kobayashi (1925-2015). To mark the occasion, the Gallery will present a selection of Kobayashi's work at the 2021 ADAA Art Show, on view 3 November 2021 through 7 November 2021 at the [Park Avenue Armory, NYC](#).

Robert Kobayashi *was one of New York's great outlier artists. He had a brief period as an abstract expressionist, but in the early 1960s devised his own folk-artist version of pointillist painting, packing the signature dots so close together that his textured images seemed solid... In the 1970s, Mr. Kobayashi made this solidity real by nailing little brush-stroke size pieces of cutout tin to wood, either flat or carved in the round. Animated by swarms of tiny dots — the nailheads — these surfaces are endlessly engaging: At once armored and delicate, fierce and charming, they record the forming process with unusual clarity.*

— Roberta Smith, *New York Times*

Robert Kobayashi served in the United States Army from 1944 to 1946 during WWII, winning four medal citations as a member of the 778th Tank Battalion. Despite this service, Kobayashi's status as a Japanese American prevented him from travelling home to his native Hawaii on leave. Instead of risking internment by his own country, Kobayashi chose to make a short but fateful journey North, where he fell into the Art Institute of Chicago and *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte—1884*. This chance encounter with pointillism would plant the seed for the artist's future practice.

After the war, Kobayashi returned to Honolulu, where he entered the School of Art at the suggestion of his sister, Fumiko. Following local success as an abstract painter, Kobayashi moved to New York in 1949, arriving at a defining moment in the New York art world. He participated in exhibitions at artist-run galleries like Brata Gallery—one of few to show artists of color—Camino Galleries, and with the dealer Sam Koontz. In the decades that followed, Kobayashi sought to differentiate himself from his abstract expressionist peers by pursuing materials and techniques that more closely aligned with his personal interests and his early love of Georges Seurat.

In 1977, Kobayashi bought a building with his wife, Kate Keller Kobayashi, on Elizabeth Street in Little Italy. Taking over an existing butcher shop, the ground floor assumed various guises, ultimately settling into its role as a gallery operating under the moniker, Moe's Meat Market. Avoiding commercial art settings, Kobayashi preferred to present his pieces at Moe's, and by 2009, the space served exclusively to exhibit his own work. A local landmark, the artist engaged passersby with rotating window displays and innovative presentations of his art, placing work directly on the floor or hanging it from the shop's original meat hooks. The gallery kept limited public hours dictated by whim rather than commerce.

Kobayashi drew his energy and materials from the streets of Little Italy, developing a unique style of mixed media dubbed by writer Michael Florescu, *clouage*, taken from the French verb meaning "to nail." Using found metals and detritus, he assembled two and three-dimensional works from discarded ceiling tin as well as beer and Cafe Bustelo cans. The selection of Robert Kobayashi's work in The 2021 ADAA Art Show surveys the artist's best-known subjects—cozy geometric interiors that record Kobayashi's time in Paris and New York, and a sculpture of Fumiko, whose delicately painted floral sweater exhibits Kobayashi's unique ability to imbue metal with softness and warmth. The show is anchored by three neo-pointillist paintings from the 1980s, *Vermont Window*, *Fleur de Lis #1*, and *String Beans*, to highlight a crucial evolution in Kobayashi's practice—the transition from painting to *clouage*.

ROBERT KOBAYASHI was born in 1925 in Honolulu, HI. After serving in the military during World War II, he was encouraged to pursue a career as an artist by his sister, attending both the Honolulu Academy of Art and the Brooklyn Museum School of Art. In 1988, Kobayashi had his first major solo exhibition, *Tattooed Angel: Paintings and Sculpture by Robert Kobayashi*, at the Nassau County Museum of Fine Art, Roslyn, NY curated by Phyllis Stigliano. Exhibitions since that time include *Inventing Downtown: Artist-Run Galleries in New York City, 1952-1965*, Grey Art Gallery, New York University, NYC; *Hawaii to New York*, Contemporary Museum at First Hawaiian Center, Honolulu, HI; and *Robert Kobayashi: Moonflowers*, New York University Broadway Windows, NYC. His work can be found in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, NYC; the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY; the Contemporary Museum, Honolulu, HI; and the Nassau Museum of Art, Roslyn, NY, among others. He died in his hometown of Honolulu in 2015.

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