

Scott, Andrea K. "Spotlight: Robert Kobayashi," *The New Yorker*, 11 September 2020.

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Courtesy Susan Inglett Gallery.

The life of the American artist **Robert Kobayashi** reads something like a Zen koan. A gardener who knew nothing about gardens, he opened a beloved gallery that was usually closed. Despite critical kudos (including a 1958 piece in this magazine) for his early abstractions, he shifted to an offbeat figurative style, a folkloric Pointillism-in-the-round. Born in Hawaii, Kobayashi, who died in 2015, at the age of ninety, came to New York in 1950, after a stint in the Army, to study art and was soon hired by MoMA to tend to a Japanese house and garden, installed outdoors. After that exhibit closed, he stayed on, working at the museum for more than two decades. In 1977, a year before Kobayashi retired, he and his wife, Kate Keller Kobayashi, bought a building in Little Italy, with a former butcher shop on the ground floor. He eventually used the storefront to display his chimerical sculptures and paintings (including "Tablescape #2," from 1999, pictured above, fashioned from ceiling tin, paint, and nails on wood) for passersby, who often encountered them through the window thanks to the gallery's unpredictable hours. On Sept. 17, the Susan Inglett gallery opens "Moe's Meat Market," an exhibition devoted to Kobayashi's spirited work.

– *Andrea K. Scott*