



THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

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**MOCA DEBUTS TAKAKO YAMAGUCHI'S FIRST SOLO MUSEUM PRESENTATION
IN LOS ANGELES ON JUNE 29**

Part of the museum's ongoing MOCA Focus series

MOCA Focus: Takako Yamaguchi

June 29, 2025–January 4, 2026

MOCA Grand Avenue



Takako Yamaguchi, *Procession*, 2024, oil and metal leaf on canvas, 40 × 60 in. (101.6 × 152.4 cm). Courtesy of the artist; Ortuzar, New York; and as-is.la, Los Angeles. Photo: Gene Ogami.

LOS ANGELES—The Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) is pleased to present *MOCA Focus: Takako Yamaguchi* from June 29, 2025 through January 4, 2026 at MOCA Grand Avenue. The exhibition marks the artist's first solo museum presentation in her adopted hometown of Los Angeles. It features ten recent paintings from her Seascapes series. For more than forty years, Yamaguchi (b. 1952, Okayama, Japan; lives in Santa Monica,

California) has prized decoration, beauty, and fashion—values often excluded from serious consideration in contemporary art history and criticism.

Coming of age as a painter in the 1970s, when the mainstream art world rewarded the austerity of Minimalism and severity of hard-edge abstraction, Yamaguchi took the opposite tack by embracing sentimentality and pleasure. She has reflected that her appreciation for aesthetic ideals that have been abandoned or deemed minor relates to her subject position as an outsider. Though born and raised in Japan, Yamaguchi's art education and career have transpired in the United States.

Yamaguchi characterizes her seascapes, begun in 2021, as “abstractions in reverse,” meaning that they derive nature from abstraction rather than the other way around. That is, they are pointedly not based on observation of the sea but instead synthesize symbols and motifs that numerous early twentieth-century European artists developed to denote nature in abstract art, architecture, and design. This body of work also harkens to North American painters of the 1920s and 1930s, such as Georgia O’Keeffe and Marsden Hartley, figures typically understood as resisting the advances of abstraction by hanging on to supposedly old-fashioned representation. Yamaguchi’s seascapes further exemplify the artist’s longstanding penchant for incorporating references to Japanese art, a knowing gesture on her part of cultural self-appropriation.

“*MOCA Focus: Takako Yamaguchi* is the third exhibition in our MOCA Focus series that relaunched in 2023 and which highlights an artist’s first solo museum presentation in Los Angeles and centers on distinct bodies of work,” said Johanna Burton, The Maurice Marciano Director. “This exhibition continues MOCA’s deep and ongoing engagement with Yamaguchi’s practice, which spans the 2019 group exhibition *With Pleasure: Pattern and Decoration in American Art 1972–1985*, and the museum’s examination of photorealist painting in *Ordinary People: Photorealism and the Work of Art since 1968*, which opened in November 2024 at MOCA Grand Avenue. Yamaguchi’s paintings insist on the power and complexity of forms long undervalued by mainstream art history, and her work challenges entrenched critical biases—against beauty, ornamentation, and femininity—to open up space for rethinking what has been excluded from dominant narratives.”

“Takako Yamaguchi’s paintings are formally precise and conceptually contrarian,” said Anna Katz, Senior Curator. “Since the early 1980s, she has experimented with various painterly modes culled from what she calls the ‘trash heap of discarded ideals’ of modernism, from *Pattern and Decoration* to Mexican Muralism and Art Nouveau, and her archly stylized seascapes are no exception. What genre could be more lost and abandoned than the seascape? Incorporating her ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’-influenced vocabulary of abstract zigzags, spirals, and braids to

denote natural forms like rain, waves, and mountains, these paintings represent a culmination of her decades-long provocations of style, taste, and identity.”

MOCA Focus: Takako Yamaguchi is organized by Anna Katz, Senior Curator, with Emilia Nicholson-Fajardo, Curatorial Assistant, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

PUBLICATION

MOCA Focus: Takako Yamaguchi is accompanied by a fully-illustrated publication designed by Jin Son of Small Graphic Project that features an essay by the curator of the exhibition. The catalogue, Yamaguchi’s first museum publication, is part of the Nimoy Emerging Artist Publication Series (Nimoy Series), which provides artists with a crucial publishing opportunity at a breakthrough moment in their careers. The Nimoy Series is made possible thanks to generous support from Susan Bay Nimoy and her late husband, Leonard Nimoy, through the Nimoy Fund for Emerging Artists.

CREDITS

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Admission to *MOCA Focus: Takako Yamaguchi* is free courtesy of Carolyn Clark Powers.

ABOUT TAKAKO YAMAGUCHI

Takako Yamaguchi (b. 1952, Okayama, Japan) lives and works in Santa Monica, California. She received a BA from Bates College in Lewiston, Maine, in 1975 and an MFA from the University of California, Santa Barbara, in 1978. She has held solo exhibitions at Ortuzar Projects, New York (2025, 2023); as-is.la, Los Angeles (2024, 2022); Ramiken Crucible, New

York (2021); Egan and Rosen, New York (2021); STARS Gallery, Los Angeles (2021); Cardwell Jimmerson Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2010); Nevada Museum of Art, Reno (2007); Kathryn Markel Fine Arts, New York (2007); and Jan Baum Gallery, Los Angeles (2006), among others. She has been included in institutional surveys including *Whitney Biennial 2024: Even Better Than the Real Thing*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2024); *Ordinary People: Photorealism and the Work of Art since 1968*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2024); *Infinite Regress: Mystical Abstraction from the Permanent Collection and Beyond*, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City (2024); *The Ocean*, Bergen Kunsthall, Norway (2021); *With Pleasure: Pattern and Decoration in American Art 1972–1985*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2019); *Transcendence: Abstraction & Symbolism in the American West*, Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, Logan, Utah (2015); *California Echoes: Women Inspired by Nature*, Orange County Center for Contemporary Art, Santa Ana, California (2007); and *L.A. Post-Cool*, San José Museum of Art, San Jose, California (2002). She is the recipient of an Anonymous Was A Woman Award (2024). Her work is in the collections of the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Musée d'Art Moderne Paris; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Nevada Museum of Art, Reno; Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, Logan, Utah; Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, California; Eli Broad Family Foundation, Los Angeles; the Lynda and Stuart Resnick Collection, Los Angeles; and Deutsche Bank, New York, among others.

ABOUT MOCA FOCUS

Between 1992 and 1999, MOCA Focus exhibitions offered an important platform for artists to present their work in their first solo museum presentation in Los Angeles. Dedicated to exhibitions of distinct bodies of work in a broad range of media, the series featured a roster of distinguished local and international artists, including Renée Green (1993), Franz West (1994), Felix Gonzalez-Torres (1994), Hiroshi Sugimoto (1994), Margaret Honda (1994), Toba Khedoori (1997), Catherine Opie (1997), and Jorge Pardo (1998). In the mid-2000s, the refreshed series shifted to feature primarily emerging Los Angeles–based artists, presenting the first L.A. museum solo exhibitions for Eric Wesley (2006), Lecia Dole-Recio (2006), Alexandra Grant (2007), and Sterling Ruby (2008), among others. With its return in 2023, MOCA Focus revived its mission of giving artists at the forefront of contemporary art their first museum presentation in Los Angeles and acknowledges the global dialogue to which Los Angeles actively participates and contributes. The series relaunched in November 2023 with *MOCA Focus: Eddie Rodolfo Aparicio* at The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA and continued in October 2024 with *MOCA Focus: Ana Segovia* at MOCA Grand Avenue. Featured artists work closely with MOCA's Curatorial and Exhibitions teams to develop new work or present recent work, receiving support to produce their work and contextualize their practice. Each exhibition is accompanied by a monographic catalogue, which documents the artist's work and includes a discursive essay written by the curator.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART (MOCA)

Founded in 1979, MOCA is the defining museum of contemporary art. In a relatively short time, MOCA has achieved astonishing growth: a world-class collection of nearly 8,000 objects, international in scope with deep holdings in Los Angeles art; hallmark education programs that are widely emulated; award-winning publications that present original scholarship; groundbreaking monographic, touring, and thematic exhibitions of international repute that survey the art of our time; and cutting-edge engagement with new modes of media production. MOCA is a not-for-profit institution that relies on a variety of funding sources for its activities.

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