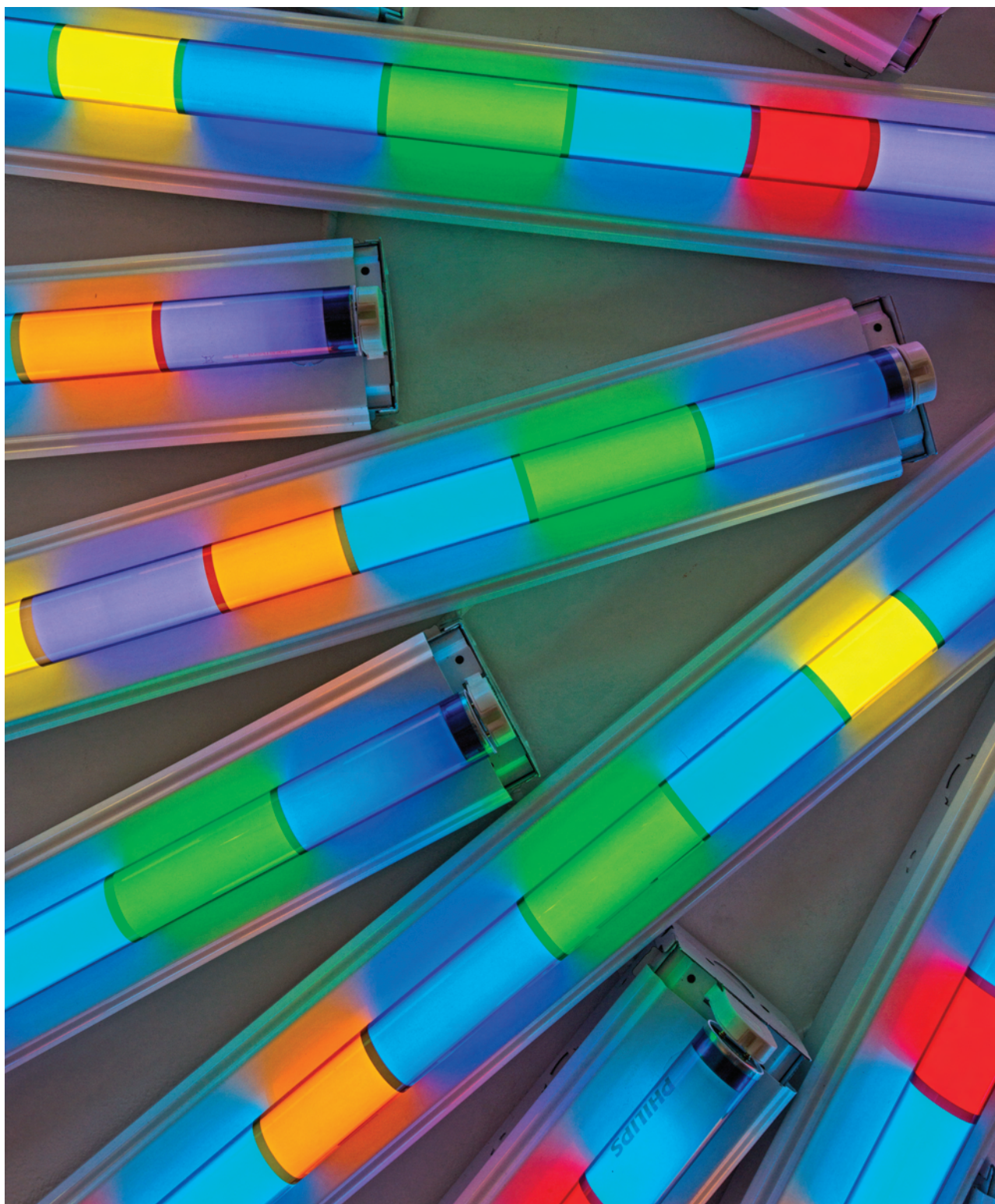


ARTnews



**Spencer Finch Follows the Light • Learning from Cézanne's Apples
Tips on Facing a Blank Canvas • The Paradox of Black Abstraction**

Robert Yasuda

Sundaram Tagore

Longtime abstract painter Robert Yasuda has made a kind of breakthrough. His newest works here verged on the lush, with an expanded palette, richer surface tonalities, and contours that are increasingly undulant, offering a more nuanced and fluid visual experience. An accomplished colorist, Yasuda is often classified as a minimalist, but over the years his paintings have become progressively more suave, sensuous, and subjective. On the one hand, they are formal inquiries—investigating the nature of color, light, and the paintings' processes and materials, including supports and frames. But they also suggest skylscapes and seascapes and are partially autobiographical, inspired by the ravishing colors of both Kauai in Hawaii, where the artist was raised, and the Florida Keys, where he works part of the year. The serenity found at the works' core is anchored in Yasuda's childhood with its Buddhist teachings.

The hand-carved wooden panels in the show were sometimes accompanied by strips of black wood—also hand carved—that act as architectural elements or framing devices, as seen, for instance, in *Synonym* (2011) or *Aurora* (2013). Viewed through the tight weave of thin fabric stretched across the support, the colors throughout are layered to add greater luminosity and depth. Especially blissful examples of radiance are the two-panel *Life Line* (2013) and the triptych *Botanikos* (2013), in which rosy hues warm the oceanic expanse of translucent greens—one of the artist's hallmark shades—furrowed by a bright turquoise in the cleft between panels.

In other, more muted works, such as *Eos* (2013) and *Glide* (2013), it seems as if Yasuda had miraculously coaxed air, mist, and other transient natural phenomena onto his atmospheric fields. Slow painting may take time to reveal itself, but often it is what we see at first glance that persuades us to linger.

—Lilly Wei



Robert Yasuda, *Botanikos*, 2013, acrylic on fabric on wood, 80" x 74". Sundaram Tagore.

Michael Rouillard

MINUS SPACE

Michael Rouillard's extraordinarily elegant exhibition of recent work consisted of a handful of spare, untitled, white paintings on aluminum that varied in scale from less than 2 by 2 feet to more than 5 by 5 feet. Two were two-

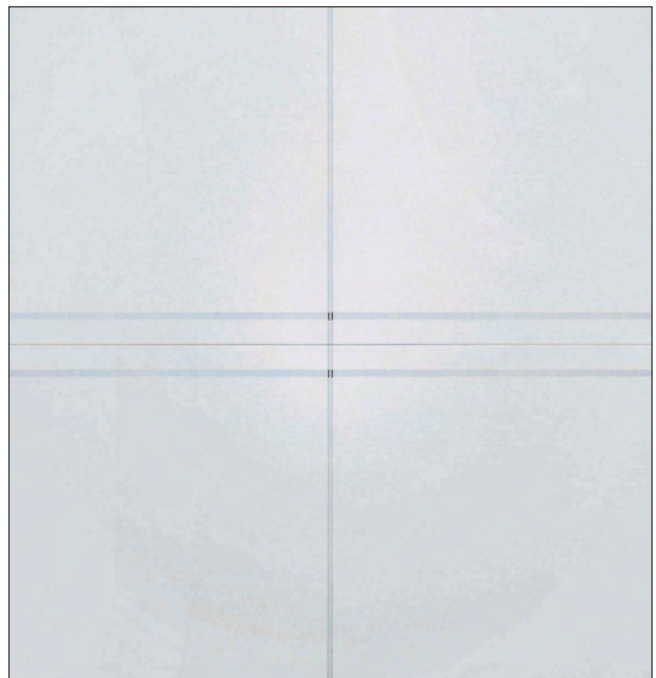
panelled, precisely abutting each other to form a fine-edged line that is a significant part of the composition—a grid that more or less divides the surface of each work into quadrants. Crossed by a few pristine lines or narrow bands, the central intersections were variously emphasized by one or two discreet points of darker markings. Despite the paintings' uncannily immaculate surfaces, they

retained an aura of the hand-made, resulting in a tension that is crucial to their appeal.

The whites—sometimes dazzling, sometimes matte—are not all the same shade, but the distinction could be hard to see depending on the angle of light. Installed on white walls, the paintings integrated themselves into the architecture. The thinness of their supports was almost inseparable from the plane of the wall. The paintings were a further iteration of “what you see is what you see,” with the surface of the work being ground zero. Representing a formal investigation into line, color, shape, and materials, the works also introduced a philosophical inquiry into what a painting is and also what constitutes the act of seeing.

Rouillard might be said to practice a kind of pure painting in which materials (paint plus support) and process (painting) become the subject, but his approach is also a recapitulation of the history of the monochrome, and that in turn refers to the larger history of a storied and still-vibrant medium.

—Lilly Wei



Michael Rouillard, *Untitled*, 2011, oil on aluminum, 20" x 16". MINUS SPACE.