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*"THE BEST ART IN THE WORLD"
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Meeting Miya Ando: “My art is a response to the zeitgeist.”



Miya Ando's studio, photo taken by Coco Dolle during a studio visit, 2022.

Waiting for the Moon

Bolinas Museum (<https://bolinasmuseum.org/>)

February 4 through April 3, 2023

By COCO DOLLE, January 2023

For the last twenty years, Japanese and American artist Miya Ando has been capturing natural phenomena from scientific and philosophical perspectives. By observing and documenting elements in nature, she records time and the impermanence of light with the methodology of a scientist. Her sculptures and paintings are an ode to the contemplation of seasons, skies, moons, tides and rains. With a masterful and innovative process, she transforms evanescent beauty to experiential permanence. Her aesthetics may outline subtle shades of colors or the fleeting nuances of time

rendered essentially with pigments, inks or micronized silver. Working with both natural and industrialized materials, she applies her coloring methods onto steel, wood, paper, glass and aluminum. By juxtaposing the polarities from our material and immaterial worlds, Miya's works epitomize a collective and universal purpose where 'art is a silent and elegant dialogue'.

While in quarantine during the first two years of the pandemic, she devoted herself to a daily drawing ritual observing the sky at night from her home window. Waiting for the Moon (<https://bolinasmuseum.org/exhibitions/miya-ando-waiting-for-the-moon/>) at the Bolinas Museum is an exhibition titled after Miya's impressive sky almanac titled Nanayo (<https://www.nana-yo.com/>) that chronicles the moon's transitions during the two year lockdown period. Every night she would observe the moon and document its phases onto paper with refined layers of natural indigo dye. The final project consists of 1,347 drawings accomplished in 905 days. It is also a bilingual dictionary of 1,145 distinct Japanese words describing the moon and its translated English equivalents. In the Japanese language, myriads of words can be used to describe natural phenomena. As a result, the titles of her works reflect upon us like some ancient reverie such as in 'Night with a Dim Moon', 'The Moon tilts' or 'Imaginary Animals that exist in the Lunar World'.

Ideally the artist-poet, the academic and the scientist meet here in perfect harmony. Ordered in a quantum-like data record, times and numbers associated with each illuminations, longitudes, moonrises and moonsets become the scientific confirmation of a celestial impermanence. The ensemble forms a majestic index of the moon with multitudes of shades of indigo blue, one of the oldest plant dyes known to humankind, about 6,000 years ago from Africa.



Aki Wa Yuugure, Miya Ando solo exhibition at Sundaram Tagore Gallery, 2022, image courtesy of Sundaram Tagore Gallery.

Where Miya grew up, in Okayama, Japan, she was surrounded by indigo blue. Its memories soothed and calmed her during the Covid lockdown period. This natural blue pigment from a bushy plant feels very humble to the artist and holds archival qualities. Over the years she learned its unique qualities: ‘Indigo dyeing is like a clock; it records time. From the time it kisses the paper, you can count 1 second, 10 seconds or 10 minutes to create 1000’s of shades of indigo, each darker than the next, a record of how long the indigo has touched the substrate illustrated in the darkness of the color’, she explains during a studio visit.

Moreover, indigo is the only vegetable blue and is an important aspect of Miya’s relationship to the environment. From her fond memories, to the tips of her fingers covered in blue, this plant dye has been Miya’s companion throughout the pandemic, a respite to combat the world’s ongoing strife .

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One walks through her studio by entering a succession of rooms, each assigned to a series in progress. One room is devoted to the alchemist, where inks and pigments are mixed with urethane on sheets of metal in what looks like a dark room. A larger room with bright daylight is covered from floor to ceiling with indigo dye where the artist paints on fabrics and papers using buckets and brushes. Hanging from wires or off of the walls, circles and constellations of papers handcrafted for the artist from Japan come in all shapes and sizes. Here the artist seems to be merging into what would feel like a full body experience. In her office area, hundreds of smaller works on papers are classified in binding books and computer data.

Another layer to her work methodology is Miya's relationship with words and language. When she was a graduate student at Yale, she wrote lists of anachronistic words in her notebooks collected from her research and from reading ancient poetry. These were eventually achieved into digital files to complete the moon and rain series. From her readings, she was particularly struck by the world's very first novel, written by Lady Murasaki Shikibu; *The Tale Of Genji* in the year 1008. Set in the Japanese imperial court, the novel is an iconic prose on the depiction of the impermanence and ephemeral qualities of beauty while contingent on empathy. Because of its temporal nature, 'Japanese culture assigns a gentle sorrow to impermanent phenomena in nature, it is called mono no aware', explains the artist. In stark contrast, occidental concepts of beauty are immortalized with pedestals of perfection such as in Adonis, a Greek God.



Engesso Cygnus (The Swan Above The Yard) Bolinas , CA 94924 Latitude- 37° 54' N Longitude- 122° 42' W November 25 2019 8-32 PM, natural indigo dye on handcrafted paper, Miya Ando, 2023, image courtesy of the artist.

In one of her earlier exhibitions at the New York-based gallery Sundaram Tagore (<https://www.sundaramtagore.com/exhibitions/miya-ando11>), Miya made further reference to the subject of transitoriness from the *The Pillow Book*, written by Heian-era noblewoman Sei Shonagon by titling her show after the very first sentence of the novel: *Aki Wa Yuugure*, 'In Autumn it is the evening'. Working from photographs of

cloud formations, Miya has an ongoing series devoted to the vernacular of clouds, a perfect visual vocabulary for transitoriness. Using watercolor-like techniques, her cloud imagery is then imprinted onto metal canvases of all shapes, circles, rectangles and multiples to create sheen layers reflecting the translucent passage of time. Fascinated by the ability of metal to capture light since childhood, Miya studied traditional metallurgy as an apprentice to a master metalsmith in Japan. Against all established protocol, this invitation was extremely unusual for a woman and particularly a woman of mixed race.

For Miya, metal is a favorite support to communicate the transitoriness and fleeting moments of light while conversely conveying permanence and materiality. Here she investigates the paradoxes of the Eastern and Western cultures. "A painting of clouds can be a lot of things in my perspective. My conditioning from being exposed to ancient thought regarding nature and philosophy creates a multitude of layers." Ando's family name being 500 years old from 16 generations, her perception has naturally shaped her vision as an artist. Her cloud paintings are currently exhibited at Kavi Gupta (<https://kavigupta.com/exhibitions/503-miya-ando-kumoji-cloud-path-a-road-kavi-gupta-washington-blvd.-fl.-2/>) gallery in Chicago.

During her childhood, Miya adopted a meditative aspect of life deeply attuned to nature. Raised under a quintessential buddhist philosophy by her grandfather who was head priest of a temple in Japan, she developed altruistic sentiments for human nature. 'In Buddhism, she says, it is believed we are all sentient human beings, able to perceive and sense the world. I'm a sentient being, I sense the world. Art is my process of thinking and perceiving. I think of artworks as the residue of thought.'

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Tasogare (Twilight) June 3 2022 8:24 pm, 2022, ink, mica, pure micronized silver, resin and urethane on aluminum, Miya Ando, 2022, image courtesy of Sundaram Tagore Gallery.

With her grandmother, who matched her kimonos to the 72 pentads ancient calendar system, she was exposed to the importance of the subtle changes in the seasons. Her work has been influenced by combining the Gregorian (Western) calendar with the ancient Chinese 24 Solar Terms calendar, its derivative Japanese 72 seasons calendar and the lunar calendar.

In today's fractured world, the works of Miya Ando lead to a simple awareness: an invitation to the collective to become attuned to the changing cycles of nature. By deciphering all microcosmic elements, she transpires to depict a macroscopic commonality. 'Especially during these disparate times, finding the things that connect us, the things that are bridges between us that we share, ultimately discuss the human condition', she mentions during the studio visit.

By capturing "l'air du temps", the fluid and solid moments in time, Miya's practice connects Eastern and Western perceptions. Innate to her background history, she is the ideal conveyor of these seemingly polarized belief's systems. Her profound knowledge of both cultures distills and refines our collective thinking mechanisms and processes. In nature she finds the perfect, the imperfect and an ally to decipher our connections with a better humankind. **WM**



COCO DOLLE

Coco Dolle (<http://www.cocodolle.com/>) is a French-American artist, writer, and independent curator based in New York since the late 90s. Former dancer and fashion muse for acclaimed artists including Alex Katz (https://www.huffpost.com/entry/artist-muse-photography-art_n_5accf519e4b0152082fe48a2), her performances appeared in Vogue (<https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/fall-2000-ready-to-wear/miguel-adrover/slideshow/collection#41>) and The NY Times (<https://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/10/arts/design/10para.html>). Over the past decade, she has organized numerous exhibitions acclaimed in high-end publications including Forbes (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/adamlehrer/2017/03/16/feminism-takes-many-forms-in-coco-dolles-milk-and-night-curatorial-project/?sh=3bb99db62381>), ArtNet (<https://news.artnet.com/market/spring-break-los-angeles-2022-2074607>), VICE (<https://www.vice.com/en/article/gybxn4/art-trends-independent-curators-v24n5>), and W Magazine (<https://www.wmagazine.com/gallery/18-artist-selfies-that-get-under-the-skin>).

She is a contributing writer for L'Officiel Art (<https://www.lofficiel.com/art/portrait-de-femme-web3-krista-kim-ambassadrice-de-la-conscience-avec-0-metaverse>) and Whitehot Magazine. As an artist, her work focuses on body politics and feminist issues as seen at the Oregon Contemporary (<https://www.oregoncontemporary.org/punkdeism>) (OR) and Mary Ryan Gallery (<https://artdaily.cc/news/21120/Corinne-Dolle--aka-Coco---Pop-Intervention---New-Paintings#.YbZPDC-B3Fk>)(NYC).

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