

Robert Kobayashi: Seeing and Being

Robert Kobayashi's signature clouage – hammered metal compositions – bring nature alive in dimensional ways.¹ The artist's childhood becomes a white antique vessel bursting with flowering branches and eloquently overflowing its frame in *My Mother Picking Wildflowers From Her Garden*. Kobayashi's deep appreciations of the paintings of Morandi, Matisse, and Cézanne come into play in this and in other works. Kobayashi discovers the inner lives of his subjects. *Block Print Hanging on a Foreign Wall* speaks about the way that an Eastern art work, showing three different boats docked in a harbor with trailing willow branches, is valued in a Western space. This reminds us that becoming part of another culture is an ongoing process between the old culture and its new setting.

The artist's early neo-Pointillist paintings evolved into metalworks patterned overall with nail heads. White tulips pointing in all directions sing from their perch in a teapot. Kobayashi's animated composition, *My Sister's Tsunami Plant*, April 1, 1949, is layered: a wooden understructure is covered with shapes in white, chartreuse, and unpainted tin mottled with verdigris signs of age. Each metal piece in the composition is punctuated with tiny nails. Kobayashi's work, shaped using a carpenter's tools, may include repeated motifs, diagonal patterns, and incised or inset features. The art is about seeing in all directions and finding and creating beauty in the present tense.

Robert Kobayashi studied art at the Honolulu Academy of Arts; then, after serving in the army at the end of World War II, he studied in Paris and New York. The artist, now 85, began his clouage techniques around 1976. Robert Kobayashi has spent over sixty years developing compositions filled with humor, surprising and intimate scenes, and a deep passion for the world of art.

Jan Garden Castro

New York City, January 2011

Castro has written books about Sonia Delaunay and Georgia O'Keeffe; she is Contributing Editor for Sculpture Magazine

¹ The term clouage was coined by Michael Florescu in his article that reviewed a Kobayashi exhibition at the Josef Gallery, NY, June 6-27, 1981. The review, "Robert Kobayashi," in *Arts*, November 1981, states: "...But his materials and his technique, which one may quite properly dignify with the neologism clouage, from the French clouer: to nail...."



My Mother Picking Wildflowers From Her Garden

ceiling tin, paint, nails on wood
19.25" x 19.25" x 1.5" 2010

Born May 5, 1925, Honolulu, Hawaii
Studied and painted at Honolulu Academy of Arts
with Wilson Stamper, and Brooklyn Museum Art School
with John Ferren
Lived in Paris 1950
Resides and works in New York City

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

MEDIA

2007- present Brooklyn, NY. Brooklyn Museum, The Brooklyn Bridge and the Brooklyn Museum: Spanning Art and History. Kobayashi's painting, from the permanent collection, featured online.

2003- present NY. New York University, Broadway Windows, Moonflowers.

SOLO

2011 NY. Moe's Meat Market, a gallery, Seeing and Being.

2007 NY. New York University, Washington Square East Windows, American Landscapes.

2006 Port Washington, NY. Port Washington Public Library, American Landscapes & Still-lives.

1988 Roslyn, NY. Nassau County Museum of Fine Art, Tattooed Angel. Curators: Phyllis Stigliano and Janice Parente in cooperation with Nicholas F. Rizzo Fine Arts. Catalog. Essay by Alec Wilkinson.

1986 NY. Moe's Meat Market, Recent Sculpture. Presented by Nicholas F. Rizzo Fine Arts.

1981 NY. Josef Gallery, Constructions in Tin.

1980 NY. Equator, Moe's Meat Market, Collage and Sculpture by Kobi.

1962 Honolulu, HI. Gima's Gallery, Paintings by Kobayashi. First solo exhibition.

GROUP

2009 Honolulu, HI. Luxury Row & Cedar Street Galleries, Hawaii's Modern Masters. Exhibition held at CHANEL, Waikiki.

2005 Honolulu, HI. The Contemporary Museum at First Hawaiian Center, Honolulu to New York. Curator: Allison Wong. Catalog.

2002 NY. New York University, 80 Washington Square East Galleries, 25th small works. Juror: Barbara Millstein.

2001 NY. Luise Ross Gallery, WET! .

1989 NY. The Museum of Modern Art, Contemporary Works from the Collection.

1983 Brooklyn, NY. Brooklyn Museum, The Great East River Bridge 1883-1983. Curator: Barbara Millstein.

1981-1982 Scottsdale, AZ. OK Harris West, Kobayashi-Larry Gerber.

1957 NY. Brata Gallery, Opening, Paintings-Sculpture.

1952 Honolulu, HI. Honolulu Academy of Arts, Artists of Hawaii.

1950 NY. Kootz Gallery, New Talent Show-1950.

ca. 1949 NY. Argent Gallery, 23 New Painters Presented by John Ferren.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

2009 Koppel, Lily. "An Artist of the Street And Quiet Reticence," *The New York Times*, 20 January.

1988 Smith, Roberta. "Provocative Exhibitions at Museums and Galleries," *The New York Times*, 5 August.

Lipson, Karin. "A Multimedia Mystery Man," *Newsday/Weekend*, 1 July.

1986 Gottesman, Alice and Donald, Linda. "They Do Windows, Notable Displays: 237 Elizabeth Street," *The Village Voice*, 7 January.

1981 Florescu, Michael. "Robert Kobayashi," *Arts Magazine*, November, Vol. 56, No. 3.

1962 Loring, Clare. "Kobayashi's Paintings, on Display at Gima's, Ablaze with Intensity," *Honolulu-Star Bulletin*, 24 March.

1958 Hamburger, Philip. "Abstraction," *The New Yorker*, *The Talk of the Town*, 9 August.

AWARDS

1958 John Hay Whitney Foundation, NY.

1950 New York City International House.

1948 Association of Honolulu Artists, HI.