

**Teruko Yokoi. Tokyo – New York – Paris – Bern**  
31.01.2020 – 10.05.2020



**The Kunstmuseum Bern is showing the first exhibition of the central early phase of Teruko Yokoi's (b. 1924) work in the 1950s and 1960s. The works from that time bear witness to an agitated era: they were made on three continents somewhere between western abstraction and Japanese tradition, as well as the ever-present horrors of the Second World War. They show the artist in a phase of extreme creativity. The Japanese artist Teruko Yoko has lived and worked in Bern for over five decades.**

**Tokyo – New York – Paris – Bern**

Teruko Yokoi was born in 1924 near Nagoya in the Japanese province of Aichi, the daughter of a calligrapher, and was given painting lessons at an early age. When she was 25 she studied with the respected Impressionist Takanori Kinoshita, and then went to Tokyo, where her works were awarded major prizes. Then, at a time when New York was beginning to overtake Paris as the capital of western culture, Yokoi decided to move to the United States. There she was given a classical training at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco, before moving on in 1955 to New York, where she moved among the artist and teacher Hans Hofmann, and from there entered the circle of Abstract Expressionism. In a world devastated by the Second World War, dehumanised by the death camps and living under the shadow of the atom bomb, artists sought new forms of representation. Yokoi found access to an artistic milieu that was developing a new pictorial language, where she met, among others, Kenzo Okada, Mark Rothko, Joan Mitchell, Franz Kline and Robert Motherwell. Yokoi's future husband, Sam Francis, as well as a member of this artistic circle. In 1960 she moved to Paris with him and their daughter. Two years later, having separated in the meantime, she decided to move to Switzerland. She has lived and worked in Bern for more than five decades.

**Between East and West**

Yokoi's works are colourfully rich, vivid and experimental. They are hybrid abstractions which move between the delicacy of Japanese calligraphy, a delight in gentleness and mystery as well as curiosity about the "American Type". The atmospheric tenderness of the palette and the application of paint contrasts the power of her gestures – a harmony of practically exploding colours and forms.

*'My pictures are poems written in paint.'* Teruko Yokoi

Teruko Yokoi's story is characterised by passion, curiosity and persistence. It describes the experiences of the existence of an artist who pursues her creative activity in spite of her surrounding political conditions, her geographical situation, her origins and her sex, and heedless of the wounds caused by this struggle. While Yokoi might have been close friends with the most famous American and European artists, she never allowed herself to be entirely absorbed by them: she was as gifted as she was innovative, and yet, bringing another legacy with her, she remained different.

### **About the exhibition**

The exhibition follows the story of an extremely productive and vital artist. Her works from the early 1950s until the present day do not only testify to her undiminished creative energy, but in their conflict between East and West also reflect the debates within post-war modern art.

The exhibition brings together a large selection of works produced between the 1950s and the early 1970s – in a period, then, when the classical artistic vocabulary was being re-evaluated. At the centre of the field of tension between modern abstraction and Japanese tradition is the time when Teruko Yokoi challenges her artistic language and tries out new things. The exhibition does not follow a purely chronological line, however, but instead pursues the artist's ever-changing travels between Tokyo, San Francisco, New York, Paris and Bern, and hence all the places that have left their traces in her work. The eye is directed towards her highly energetic and revolutionary art, which was made in the milieu of the artists who shaped crucial narratives of the art history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Invitation to the media preview**

Kunstmuseum Bern cordially invites you to join the media preview of the exhibition «Teruko Yokoi. Tokyo – New York – Paris – Bern» with curator Marta Dziewańska on Thursday, **30 January 2020** at **11 a.m.** at Kunstmuseum Bern. Further individual appointments are possible on request.

Please confirm your presence via [press@kunstmuseumbern.ch](mailto:press@kunstmuseumbern.ch).

### **Curator**

Marta Dziewańska, Curator Kunstmuseum Bern

### **Publication**

*Teruko Yokoi. Tokyo - New York - Paris-Bern.* Ed. Marta Dziewańska and Nina Zimmer. German and English edition, 168 pp., 100 ills., Hatje Cantz, ISBN 978-3-7757-4682-3.

### **Supported by**

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You can download press images as well as further information on the Kunstmuseum Bern [media web-page](#).

### **Kontakt**

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