

KENT FINE ART in conjunction with Upstate Art
Weekend
Is pleased to present

TERUKO YOKOI
Hinageshi

Poppies
On View June 25 – 29, 2026, 10 – 6 pm
July by appointment



Yokoi enjoyed a pastoral childhood, wandering the hills outside Nagoya with her father, a calligrapher and poet who instructed her in both art forms. The pair frequently ventured out on what he called *haiku hiroi* (haiku-gathering) expeditions, soaking up impressions of the natural world to transliterate into poetry. She later described her paintings as "*poems written in colors.*"

There, one morning while walking to her studio, she had a mystical experience. She felt an uncanny sensation of cold wind blowing through her entire body, as if she were porous and transparent. Somehow, this reawakened her idyll of Old Japan, which she called "*my paradise- everything was crystal clear from the mountains down to the Pacific... even the fish were transparent.*" It was a turning point in her work. From pure abstraction, her style evolved into semi-abstracted, Japanese-inflected landscapes. Crisscrossing and crescent-shape gestures stood in for grasses, clouds, snow, and poppies. Thin strips of vertical calligraphy, excerpting traditional haiku, sluiced down picture surfaces like raindrops.

In Switzerland beginning in the early 1960s, Yokoi recognized in the country's pristine landscapes the elements of Japanese landscapes that she had so loved and remembered from her past, but which were, by the 1960s, largely gone at the expense of post-war urbanization. Willy Rotzler, upon Yokoi's artistic debut in the Swiss art world, described her paintings as "imaginary inner landscapes that do not exist in this form, neither here in the West nor in the Far East... pictorial and metaphorical concentrations of emotive devotion to the unutterable, to the experience." The fact that Yokoi filtered much of her imagery through her memories of a no-longer-extant prewar Japan complicates that temporality further, tempering our confidence in the predictable shift of the seasons with awareness that even those things that seem most enduring will one day be irretrievably lost. Yokoi's paintings preserve this transmuted reality, along with the knowledge that the only real certainty is the flickering glimmer of change.

Once the Covid pandemic travel restrictions were lifted following her death, a special celebration was held at the Thun Castle in Schlossberg featuring her favorite motif, "*Poppies*"

"...poppies 'don't mind if we look at them or not. Each one has its own life and its own beauty. They are proud in their own way, but they are not loud. They can pop up at any place they like and enjoy being free".

Exhibition In collaboration with Kayo Malik & Tai Wallace

Teruko Yokoi

(b. 1924 Tsushima, Japan. d. 2020 Bern, Switzerland)

Teruko Yokoi's story is one of courage and tenacity. She arrived in the United States of America as an outsider and persevered through barriers of race and gender. Yokoi was born in 1924 in Tsushima City, near Nagoya, Aichi, Japan, and from a young age was exposed to a variety of different artistic influences. Her father was a calligraphist and poet who familiarized her with the traditions of *haiku hirou*. Her favorite haiku was about poppies, "*about how you can't fence them in. When I first read it, I had the feeling it was about me.*" Yokoi began taking painting lessons, and in 1949, relocated to Tokyo to become a student of the renowned painter Takanori Kinoshita. She soon developed a fervor for European contemporary art, and in the wake of World War II, Yokoi received a scholarship to attend the California School of Fine Arts (later renamed San Francisco Art Institute). Arriving in 1954, Yokoi spent a formative year as one of two Japanese students entrenched in a milieu of artists and writers. Yokoi swiftly turned further towards abstraction, creating works which responded to a distinctly modern visual language.



Upon receiving a grant for her studies in 1955, Yokoi moved to New York and enrolled in the school of the legendary German Abstract Expressionist Hans Hofmann. It was during this time that Yokoi met Kenzo Okada, an Abstract Expressionist Japanese-born painter working in America, who moved from Tokyo to New York in 1950. Okada introduced her to Mark Rothko and others associated with the Martha Jackson Gallery including Joan Mitchell, Franz Kline, and Robert Motherwell. In 1957, Yokoi met Sam Francis and the couple married in 1959 and welcomed their daughter while they resided in the penthouse of the Chelsea Hotel. In 1960, Yokoi moved to Paris where she frequently saw Joan Mitchell and Shirley Jaffee, and from abroad, participated in a group exhibition at the storied Martha Jackson Gallery in New York. In 1961 she was featured with her first international exhibition at the cutting-edge Minami Gallery in Tokyo. Later in Paris she would meet Arnold Rüdinger that would lead to her first major museum exhibition in Basel at the Kunsthalle in 1964.

There have been over ninety solo exhibitions beginning with the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco; Martha Jackson Gallery, New York; Galerie Kornfeld, Bern, the Kunstmuseum Bern and most recently with Marlborough Gallery and Hollis Taggart in conjunction with Kent Fine Art and the Emerald Room.. There are two museums dedicated to Yokoi's work in Japan: Teruko Yokoi Hinageshi Museum (opened in 2004), and Teruko Yokoi Fuji Museum of Art in Shizuoka (opened in 2008).. Her last major retrospective entitled "Teruko Yokoi: Tokyo/New York/Paris/Bern" was presented by the Kunstmuseum in Bern in 2020.

ABOUT Kent Fine Art

My evolution towards becoming a gallerist passed through several phases of increasing involvement in the art world. Beginning when I was 18, I began to envision becoming an artist partially by my becoming an assistant to several older artists in California. This led to my being hired by a regional museum in the Central California while pursuing my MFA predominately in Studio. My graduate advisor was Charles Gaines, and visiting artists with whom I worked included Richard Artschwager, Yvonne Rainer, Dewain Valentine, Allen Ruppersberg, Richard Nonas and others. As curator, I organized a traveling museum survey of Alex Katz (1975) which was followed by Marlborough Gallery hiring me precipitating my move to New York. After seven years at Marlborough working closely with Francis Bacon, R.B. Kitaj, Alex Katz, Larry Rivers, Red Grooms and the Estates of Jacques Lipchitz and Barbara Hepworth, I left and founded Kent Fine Art in 1985. Originally located at Madison & 57th Street, the gallery later relocated to Soho and then Chelsea to relate more closely with the artist community. Kent Fine Art would publish over 70 scholarly books and organize over 250 exhibitions worldwide. Representing the surrealists Dorothea Tanning and Meret Oppenheim, The Estate of Herbert Bayer (Bauhaus), to the larger group of major contemporary artists, Dennis Adams, Chris Burden, Llyn Foulkes, Antoni Muntadas, the gallery would provide exhibition support, and a research archive. Now having relocated to a newly renovated Carriage House (1911) in Pine Plains, we have narrowed our focus to artists of record whose conceptual thoughtfulness I find the most substantial and merit my full attention and efforts.

We have also maintained our extensive research on Medardo Rosso, John Heartfield, Francis Picabia and the comprehensive archives of Antoni Muntadas and Dennis Adams. Inquiries: www.kentfineart.net