

ULTERIOR

Minoru Yoshida

Performances in New York

October 20–November 25, 2018



Minoru Yoshida, *Synthesizer Jacket #2*, 1974.

Photo: Courtesy of Midori Yoshida, photographer unknown.

Ulterior Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of the late Japanese artist Minoru Yoshida (1935–2010), who produced many performances while living in New York from 1970 to 1978. Following our previous screening program in 2017 that focused on Yoshida's works dating from 1974–75, we will exhibit three videos from 1976 and related drawings and photographs. The exhibition opens on October 20, with a reception from 6 to 8 pm featuring a performance at 6:30 pm by Gendai Kazoku, the art/sound performance troupe, established by the artist with his family in Japan in 2000 which has been continued by his wife and two sons.

Minoru Yoshida was born in Osaka in 1935 and graduated from the painting department at Kyoto City University of Fine Arts, Kyoto, Japan, in 1959. He began exhibiting his paintings in Kyoto in the early 1960s and, introduced by Kazuo Shiraga and approved by Jiro Yoshihara, joined the legendary post-war Japanese artist collective Gutai Art Association in 1964. In the '60s, Yoshida began to develop the abstract forms depicted in his paintings into three-dimensional works and kinetic sculptures. Inspired by 1960s science fiction, the psychedelic movement, and the new technology and materials of the time, he created sculptures made of Plexiglas, sometimes incorporated with black light and mechanical elements. Yoshida's Plexiglas sculptures won the Ohara Art Museum Award in 1967 and he became recognized in Japan as one of the most prominent figures in the new wave of art.

Yoshida left Japan for the United States in February 1970, first spending several months in Los Angeles, then relocating to New York, where he would live until 1978. In this new environment, he met or reconnected with other Japanese artists living in the city, including Yasunao Tone, Tomio Miki, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Ushio Shinohara, and others. For many expatriate artists, life in New York could be a struggle; however, the mixture of the outsiders that he associated with and the burgeoning New York art scene inspired Yoshida to explore a new phase of his art focused on performance. For his performances in the city, he created *Synthesizer Jacket* (1974), featured in the videos on view in the exhibition. This wearable sculpture made with Plexiglas and a hand-made synthesizer system developed from the technologically oriented works that Yoshida was making in Japan in the later 1960s.

This exhibition presents three videos documenting Yoshida's 1976 performances in New York: *Absolute Landscape #3 (Psychic Revolution) at the Abandoned Hotel in Woodstock*, *Epicurism of Space Universe: The Absolute Landscape #3*, and an untitled video featuring the Synthesizer Jacket.

ULTERIOR

Around this time, language and its potential for connectivity (under the rubric of “Absolute Landscape”) became a focus of Yoshida’s performances. In *Epicurism of Space Universe: The Absolute Landscape #3*, Yoshida creates a long Japanese writing paper covered with calligraphy and wraps himself in it as if he was enclosed in a pupa. *Absolute Landscape #3 (Psychic Revolution) at the Abandoned Hotel in Woodstock* features a scene in which two young women dressed in Yoshida’s Plexiglas costumes call out words, one in English and one in Japanese, as if testing their viability as communication assets. In both videos, Yoshida wears the Synthesizer Jacket, emitting electronic sounds during the performances. These sounds, implying a kind of code, add another sense of potential language connectivity to the performances.

Whereas Yoshida’s earlier performances from 1974–75 placed the artist in the role of an alien attempting to interact with strangers without the benefit of a common language, Yoshida utilizes both English and Japanese in his 1976 performances. This development may reflect Yoshida’s changing status in New York and his evolving views of the possibility of communication with others.

Yoshida returned to Kyoto in 1978. His New York-based performance work continued to influence the work he made in Japan. He established a private museum, Ozora Live Museum, at his residence in Kyoto and produced numerous events and performances there involving art, music, poetry, and Butoh; it became a gathering place for artistic talents from a wide variety of backgrounds and disciplines. Yoshida’s life and art practice continued to merge, and from 1980 through 1991, he undertook a series of performances to realize day-to-day life in the exhibition space by inhabiting the museum during the duration of the annual Kyoto Independent Exhibitions. In 1982, Yoshida participated in the group exhibition *Bijutsu Gekijou [Art Theater]* at Hyogo Prefectural Museum, into which he imported his personal living space, including his furniture and kitchen appliances (which he used to serve coffee to visitors), again living in the space for the course of the exhibition. He established the Gendai Kazoku (Contemporary Family) with his family members Midori Araki, Shonen Yoshida, and Asao Yoshida. Yoshida recreated *Synthesizer Jacket* in 2000, with Asao wearing and playing it during performances. After Yoshida’s death in 2010, Gendai Kazoku continued to perform, now as a group of three.

Minoru Yoshida’s works are in the collection of Ashiya City Museum of Art and History, Hyogo, Japan; Ohara Museum of Art, Okayama, Japan; Takamatsu Municipal Museum, Kagawa, Japan; Niigata Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Niigata, Japan; and National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, Japan. Exhibition history and past awards include; *Possible Futures: Japanese Postwar Art and Technology*, Inter Communication Center, Tokyo, Japan (2005); *Fluorescent Chrysanthemum: Contemporary Japanese Art*, ICA London, UK (1968); *Gendai no Kuukan '68: Hikari to Kankyou [Contemporary Space '68: Lights and Environment]*, Kobe Sogo Department Store, Hyogo (1968); *Nihon Kokusai Bijutsu-ten [Japan International Art Exhibition]*, Ohara Museum Purchase Prize (1967), Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, Tokyo and Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art, Kyoto, Japan ; *Mainichi Gendai Bijutsu-ten [Mainichi Contemporary Art Exhibition]*, Concour Award (1966). One of Yoshida’s most important works from the Gutai era, *Bisexual Flower* (1969), first shown at the World Expo in Osaka, Japan in 1970, has been exhibited in many Gutai retrospectives, most recently in *Gutai: Splended Playground* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in 2013.



Supported by Arts Council Tokyo (Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture).