

PAUL THIEBAUD GALLERY

Where Things Begin: 10 American Artists of the Asian Diaspora

Freddy Chandra Aaron Chung, Marc Katano, Yasuhide Kobashi, Joshua Moreno,
Grace Munakata, Arthur Okamura, Sono Osato, Barbara Takenaga, and Leo Valledor

May 1 – June 7, 2025

Opening reception: Thursday, May 1st, 6-8pm

In celebration of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, Paul Thiebaud Gallery is pleased to announce the opening of *Where Things Begin: 10 American Artists of the Asian Diaspora* on Thursday, May 1, 2025, with a reception from 6-8pm. On view will be paintings, drawings, and sculptural reliefs by Freddy Chandra, Aaron Chung, Marc Katano, Yasuhide Kobashi, Joshua Moreno, Grace Munakata, Arthur Okamura, Sono Osato, Barbara Takenaga, and Leo Valledor. The exhibition explores how American artists with heritages from across Asia respond to and navigate the influence of both Eastern and Western aesthetics in the creation of their work. Through abstraction and forms of representation, the exhibition highlights each artist's unique balance and synthesis of these traditions. The exhibition will be on view through June 7, 2025.

Eastern and Western aesthetics have origins in different philosophical, spiritual, and visual traditions. Since the establishment of fully global trading in the 17th century, these aesthetic traditions have intersected on a continual basis. In the United States, this interaction began primarily in the 19th century when populations migrated from countries across Asia to what is now California, and it has continued ever since. Many of the artists produced by this diaspora to the U.S. have found themselves at this cultural intersection and have had to navigate this terrain when creating their art. The artists featured in this exhibition have each responded in their own way, each as unique as their respective works.

Inspired by fleeting sounds barely perceived, Freddy Chandra's painted, cast acrylic and resin wall reliefs embody their own aesthetic territory within the legacy of the Light and Space movement. Utilizing a key material in American modernism, Chandra's sense of color and the flow state he achieves in the process of creating the work are two elements he feels are influenced by his heritage. **Freddy Chandra** was born in Jakarta, Indonesia to parents with ancestry in China. In 2002, he received a BA in Architecture and Art Practice from UC Berkeley and in 2004 earned his MFA from Mills College in Oakland. From 2004-2017 he was an adjunct professor of art at Mills College. He has had residencies at the Djerassi Resident Arts Program in Woodside, CA (2009), the Headlands Center for the Arts (2007), and at the Kala Art Institute (2006). His works have been shown across

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the United States, as well as in Italy, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Panama, and Canada, and can be found in numerous private collections.

Born and raised in San Francisco and now living in Brooklyn, NY, **Aaron Chung** (American, of Korean heritage) earned his BFA in Painting, with a minor in Art History, in 2013 from the Maryland Institute College of Art. In 2014 he received a Fulbright Fellowship that took him to Seoul, South Korea for research and an artist residency. In 2016 he was an artist resident at Shiro Oni Studio in Gunma, Japan. His works have been featured in exhibitions in the United States, Italy, Japan, and South Korea. Chung's scrolls re-interpret the traditions of Korean scroll painting through a Western lens. Separating the structure of the painting into two different physical layers, Chung has replaced traditional backgrounds with western, gesturally abstract brushwork. In turn, he has taken their detailed line drawings of figures and buildings and transformed them into cut out silhouettes made from painted canvas that float a few inches in front of the background.

Marc Katano's carved acrylic and oil stick paintings on paper depict gestures made by the simplest movements of the artist's hand. Inspired by the pictographic forms of the Kanji alphabet, Katano's works represent a synthesis of the western abstract tradition with the beautiful space and truth to materials restraint found in Japanese aesthetics. **Marc Katano** was born in 1952 on an American military base in Tokyo, Japan to parents who were Japanese American and Japanese. In 1975, he earned his Bachelor of Fine Art with Distinction from the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland (now California College of the Arts, San Francisco) and in 1981 he received the SECA Award from the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. His paintings have been exhibited extensively across the United States and in Japan, and can be found in the collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Crocker Art Museum, Honolulu Museum of Art, San Jose Museum of Art, and the Zimmerli Art Museum, among others.

Yasuhide Kobashi (American, born in Japan, 1931-2003) was born in Kojima, Okayama Prefecture, Japan into a family of artists. In 1955 he graduated from the Kyoto College of Crafts and Textiles, and in 1959 moved to New York City. In a career spanning over five decades, Kobashi became well known for his woodblock prints, sculpture, stage set designs, and paintings. His works have been collected by The Museum of Modern Art, NY, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Cleveland Museum of Art, among others. Kobashi's calligraphic brush drawings featured in the exhibition are seemingly traditional, while also being not. Made from the repetition of a single Kanji character on paper and the occasional animal or object it signifies, these works recall western abstract field paintings by Roman Opalka and others, as much as they are tied to the tradition of sumi-e ink brushwork in Japan.

Contemporary in feel and manner, Joshua Moreno's *Such Great Heights* drawings are inspired by the hills and agricultural fields surrounding his home town in Monterey County, California, where his

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Filippino and Mexican ancestors labored. Made by repetitively applying countless circular marks in graphite, Moreno's works explore efficiency in their creation through the absence of using tools, as well as the profound presence and importance of circular shapes in both the natural and human worlds. **Joshua Moreno** was born in Watsonville, CA and in 2011 earned a BFA in Art Practice from the University of California, San Diego. In 2022, he earned his MFA in Studio Art from Stanford University. In 2022, Moreno was a Graduate Fellow at the Headlands Center for the Arts and in 2023 received a residency at Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris, France. He currently teaches in the art departments of Stanford University and San Jose State University.

Collaging together imagery from different experiences in her life, **Grace Munakata** interweaves these recognizable elements with passages of abstract brushstrokes in each of her compositions. Much like the layering of fabrics in the Japanese Boro mending technique she learned from her mother, Munakata blends this tradition with Western gestural, non-objective abstraction, resulting in a unique fusion of both sets of aesthetics. The daughter of second generation Japanese American (Nisei) parents, Grace Munakata was born in Monterey, CA, and earned both her BA (1980) and MFA (1985) from the University of California, Davis. She has earned numerous awards and residencies, including those from the Morris Graves Foundation in 2022, Sitka Center for Art and Ecology in 2020, and the Skaftfell Artist Residency at the Center for Visual Arts, Seydisfjordur, Iceland in 2018. From 1988-2021 she was a Professor of Painting and Drawing at California State University, East Bay. Her works have been exhibited across the United States and are represented in numerous public and private collections, including the Crocker Art Museum and the Jan Shem and Maria Manetti Shrem Museum of Art.

Painted in the late 1960s during his "Visionary" period of art making, Arthur Okamura's *Sky Happening* and *Floral Constructions* were created during a period of artistic and spiritual exploration for the artist. Influenced by the counterculture of the San Francisco Bay Area, where he was living, Okamura was actively studying Zen Buddhism with master Shunryū Suzuki Roshi during this time, informing his works with a unique perspective that set him apart from other artists and had a lasting impact on his career. **Arthur Okamura** (American, of Japanese descent, 1932-2009) was born in Long Beach, CA, and grew up in the city of Compton in greater Los Angeles. Between 1950-1954, Okamura studied at the Art Institute of Chicago, the University of Chicago, and attended a summer seminar at Yale University. From 1966-1997, he was a Professor of Fine Arts at the California College of Arts and Crafts (now California College of the Arts, San Francisco). His works have been exhibited extensively across the United States and can be found in many museum collections, including the Whitney Museum of American Art, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Smithsonian American Art Museum, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Art Institute of Chicago.

Mining antiquated western technologies of the mechanical age, like typewriters and adding machines, for their component parts, **Sono Osato** employs these visual forms as a language for

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creating her abstract paintings. Layering these shapes over one another and intertwining them with succinct, elegant linework to create pictorial depth, Osato utilizes a sense of space and perception that originates from a higher, overall perspective, which is a key aspect of Japanese art. Sono Osato was born in Baden-Baden, Germany to Japanese and Irish/French Canadian parents. She received her BFA from Arizona State University, Tempe, and her MFA from the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland (now California College of the Arts, San Francisco.) Osato was the recipient of Pollock-Krasner Foundation grants in 1989, 1999, and 2008. Her works have been exhibited across the United States and can be found in the collections of the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, Oakland Museum of California, di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art, and the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, OH.

For **Barbara Takenaga**, her acrylic paintings of cascading lines and dots are an embodiment of her interest “in that place where an image is almost a thing, almost representational, but also just paint or just shape.” It is an in between place, one she feels “implies a kind of visual tolerance,” and one where you can “hold onto the opposing things at the same time.” Barbara Takenaga was born in North Platte, Nebraska and earned both her BFA in 1972 and her MFA in 1978 from the University of Colorado, Boulder. From 1985-2018, Takenaga was a Professor of Art at Williams College in Williamstown, MA. She has received numerous awards, grants and fellowships throughout her career, including becoming an Elected Academician of the National Academy of Art in New York in 2013 and receiving the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship in 2020. Her works can be found in numerous private and public collections, including Yale University Art Gallery, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, The Library of Congress, Crocker Art Museum, San Jose Museum of Art, and the Sheldon Memorial Art Museum.

Leo Valledor's *Untitled* study drawings capture at a small scale the color harmonies and complex visual structures of his paintings. Using dynamic combinations of color to visually convey a note from jazz music, Valledor expanded the possibilities of hard-edged geometric abstraction to create perceptual space in his works, going well beyond his contemporaries Ellsworth Kelly and Frank Stella. Born and raised in San Francisco's Fillmore District, **Leo Valledor** (American, of Filipino descent, 1936-1989) attended the California School of Fine Arts (later known as the San Francisco Art Institute) from 1953-1955. He became an early member of the 6 Gallery in San Francisco and later a founding member of Park Place Gallery in New York City after his move there in 1961. After returning to San Francisco in 1968, Valledor exhibited and taught until his death. Valledor works have been shown in exhibitions across the United States and in South America, and in many permanent collections, including the Whitney Museum of American Art, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Yale University Art Gallery, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Berkeley Art Museum, Oakland Museum of California, San Jose Museum of Art, and the University of Agder, Kristiansand, Norway.

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