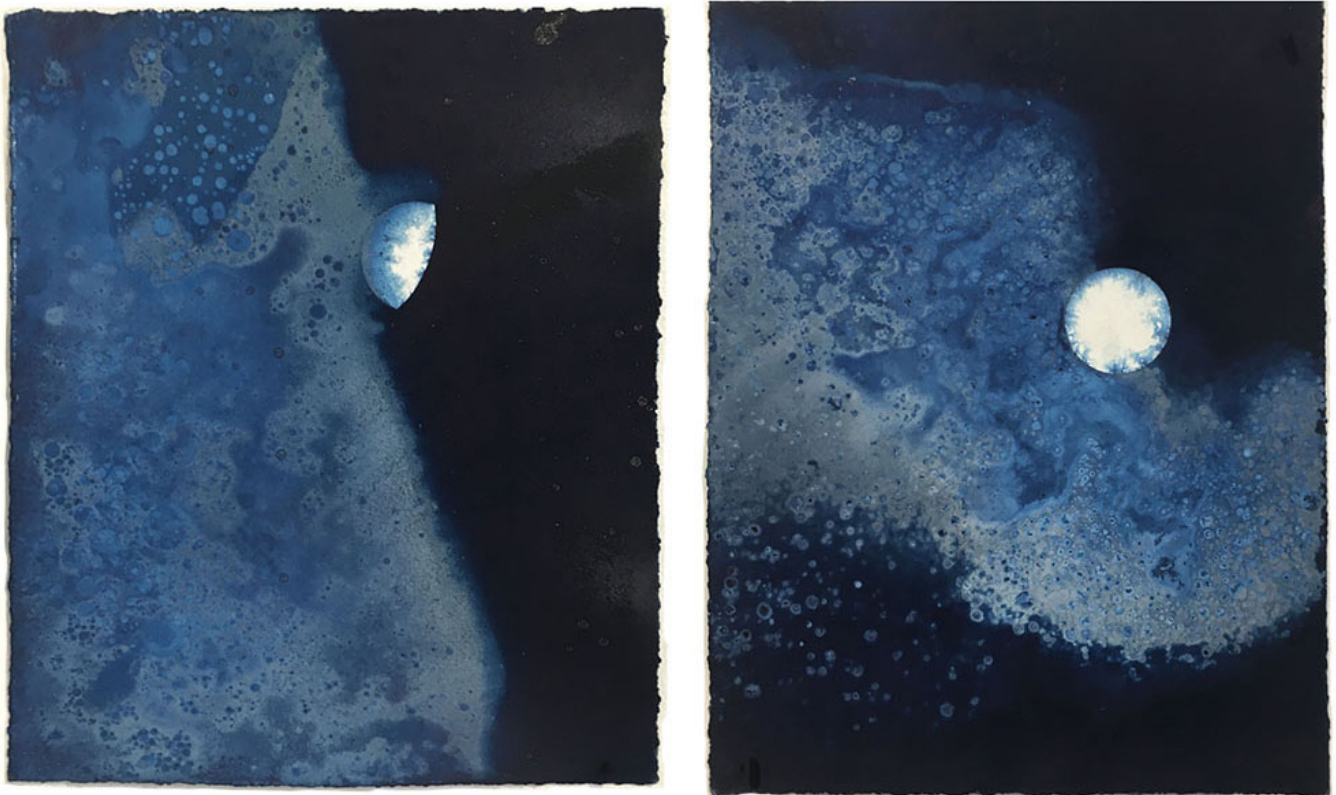

Miya Ando's 'Moon Almanac'

MAY 28, 2023

by David M. Roth



Selections from 30 Days of Moon Almanac, 2021, natural indigo, micronized pure silver, Hahnemuhle paper, 11 x 8.5 inches each

Concretizing – or at least capturing hints of the ephemeral – has long been a hallmark of Miya Ando's art, a Buddhist-influenced, Post-Minimalist practice that encompasses metallurgy, painting, sculpture, drawing and public art installations. In *Waiting for the Moon*, the artist's fourth exhibition with Nancy Toomey Fine Art, Ando carries those ideas and methods forward, combining things we've seen previously (cloud paintings made on aluminum panels) with things we've not, most notably, an exquisite suite of silver-flecked drawings of the moon and three charred-wood sculptures. Together, they form a spare, elegant exhibition that tidily summarizes the artist's longstanding interests in perception, temporality and the interrelationship between humans and the natural world.



Unkai (A Sea of Clouds) Bolinas California 12:30:2021, 7-20 PM, 2021, ink on aluminum composite, 45.75 inches diameter

The show takes its title from a group of 1,347 small-scale (8 ½ x 11-inch) indigo dye drawings Ando made in during the pandemic in which she depicted the moon at various stages over 18 months, all executed from what appears to be the same vantage point: her rooftop in New York. Thirty of those images (the same group that was exhibited earlier this year at the Bolinas Museum) are now on view here, displayed across one wall in a tight grid. My fascination with them rests not with how they represent the moon, which appears true to life, but with how the artist treats the sky, painting it in hues that more closely resemble those of the ocean at different depths rather than what we see in at night in Manhattan. Their bubbly, frothy atmospheric, painted in colors ranging from black to aquamarine, recall, in their details,

underwater scenes painted by the late Peter Alexander, a seminal Light and Space artist. So, while, on one hand, Ando's childhood (divided between Japan and the US), her early exposure to metallurgy (her ancestors were swordsmiths) and Buddhism set her apart from Alexander and his Southern California cohorts, her metaphysical leanings and her ongoing reliance on industrial processes and materials place her squarely in the Light and Space camp.

Unkai (A Sea of Clouds) Bolinas California 12/30/2021, 7:20 PM, an ink painting executed on a tondo-shaped piece of aluminum, is a perfect example. Viewed straight-on, it shows clouds against a daytime sky. But, like desert rocks that change color as the Earth turns, *Unkai* reflects changes in light temperature, its colors shifting between blue and gunmetal gray, depending on where you stand. That, in itself, is not revelatory. What makes *Unkai* and other similarly conceived paintings compelling is that Ando paints the panels with inks and pigments that, when heated, abraded and chemically treated, yield anamorphic effects that feel closer to those seen in photographic tintypes than to anything in contemporary painting: When seen at a 45-degree angle, it dissolves into an unreadable glare, a blank



January 4 2021 Matsu Pine Shou Sugi Ban, Silver, 2021, reclaimed charred pine, silver, nitrate, 11 x 11 x 11 inches

screen, only to reappear in full — nodding, perhaps, to the long tradition of religious painting's use of anamorphosis to reveal hidden truths or miracles performed by saints.

While Ando doesn't consciously invoke either, certain of her works do carry otherworldly overtones. I'm thinking in particular of a trio of wood (pine and redwood) sculptures that rest on the floor like bits of space junk fallen to Earth — singed, but intact. They're 11-inch cubes, cut from planks the same size as wood joists found in 19th-century loft buildings and sailing ships of the same vintage, remnants of which you can periodically spot sticking out of the sand from beached shipwrecks up and down the California coast. With one half charred to a blackened crisp, and the other half doused in gleaming silver nitrate, they



Foreground: Three works from the Shou Sugi Ban series, reclaimed charred wood with silver nitrate, 11-inch cubes; background: Engesso (Moon Enso) Pegasus above the Yard Bolinas, CA November 25 2021 8:11PM, 2022, pure silver, graphite, natural indigo dye, washi paper, 65 x 65 inches

exist in the gap between nature and human artifice. That duality is clearly intentional, but it resolves as quickly as it's summoned; black melts into silver and vice versa, and there's no separating the two. These objects and everything surrounding them, argue – eloquently — for the unity of all things, living and inanimate.

Miya Ando: "Waiting for the Moon Traveling from Bolinas Art Museum" @ [Nancy Toomey Fine Art](#) to July 1, 2023.