

# Miya Ando

## *Kuu / 空*

Artist | Miya Ando  
Exhibition Title | *Kuu / 空*  
Dates | October 31 (Sat.) – December 26 (Sat.), 2020  
Location | MAKI Gallery / Tennoz, Tokyo



Miya Ando, *Unkai (Sea of Clouds)* 48.89.5, 2020, dye on aluminum composite, 121.9 x 227.3 cm

We are pleased to present, *Kuu / 空*, a solo exhibition by New York-based artist, Miya Ando, at MAKI Gallery / Tennoz, Tokyo. Ando depicts 'shinrabansho' (森羅万象; all things in nature, the whole of creation) using various materials such as metal, cloth and wood as her 'canvas.' She creates a variety of artworks, including paintings, sculptures and installations. Nevertheless, consistent across all of her work is the coexistence of different cultures and elements. This stems from her Japanese and American parentage, through which she attained a deep understanding of both cultures. The perspectives on nature and on the world that she has thereby nurtured enrich her work.

The motifs chosen by Ando, such as *Unkai* (雲海; a sea of clouds) and *Kumo* (雲; cloud), appear to have form but are essentially formless; they are phenomena, so to speak. It is almost as if her work is asking us whether what we see really exists. In fact, clouds, which are an accumulation of water vapor, constantly change their shape and never stay the same. Moreover, these motifs are painted on hard, unyielding metal. Ando sublimates these different elements in one work, reminding us the fleeting nature of existence, its beauty and fragility.

Even metal is subject to transformation over time. However, Ando is drawn to the light that lies hidden therein. In the artist's own words, "I'm very interested in metal as a medium. While its physical properties to not change very much, it reflects light differently depending on the viewer's movement, changing its appearance from moment

to moment. Silver and aluminum reflect the world that lies before them but by doing so, they cease to exist. They become a kind of void.” The fact that the artist’s ancestors were sword craftsmen in Okayama Prefecture, Japan, also plays a part in her profound understanding of metal.

Ando has also begun incorporating traditional indigo dye in her works this year. The deep color of the dye recalls the night, the sea and the universe. It seems to be nothing and yet envelops everything. Indigo is also a traditional Japanese color and for the artist, it is the color she associates with Japan, especially Okayama Prefecture, where she lived as a child.

The title of this exhibition, *Kuu / 空*, is a comprehensive concept that describes Ando’s work. The artist has explained that, “Since all things are impermanent and have no fixed nature, they are empty of inherent existence. I am also interested in Kuu as sky, a vast space of voidness or emptiness that is an opportunity for anything to enter. Kuu/空 as an element of aether/air/void\*<sup>1</sup> has always been quite interesting to me and can be the context for the yakisugi works, silver mirror works, indigo paintings, all are investigations into this idea.” At this exhibition which will be held on an unprecedented scale, the gallery space will be filled with water, earth, wood, fire, sky, cloud, vapor, forest, moon and galaxy, woven from Ando’s unique sensibilities. This year, many museums, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), have decided to acquire her work for their collections. We are delighted to introduce an artist who is gaining such recognition worldwide and we invite you to take this opportunity to fully experience her art.

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\* 1 To the four classical elements of Ancient Greek philosophy – air, fire, earth, water – Aristotle proposed the addition of ‘aether’. According to Ayurvedic traditions in India, the five basic elements are ‘air, wind, fire, water, earth’. The basic elements according to Buddhism are ‘earth, water, fire, wind, air (空)’, with ‘air (空)’ representing ‘void’.

## —Miya Ando



Born in 1973, in Los Angeles, California, Miya Ando received her BA in East Asian Studies from the University of California, Berkeley, before going on to study Buddhist iconography and imagery at Yale University and becoming an apprentice at master metalsmith, Hattori Studio, in Okayama Prefecture, Japan.

Using a variety of materials including steel, aluminum, and wood, Ando creates abstract paintings, sculptures and installations. Her work has also been characterized as Post-Minimalist, with her metal-paintings being perhaps the most well-known. Applying heat to steel or aluminum, the artist layers colors, applies chemicals or lacquers, sands and polishes to add shine to the metal. Through this process, subtle gradations that recall sun, sky or cloud appear on the surface, revealing the artist’s unique perspective to the onlooker.

Ando’s work is infused with a Buddhist worldview, as well as a traditional Japanese view of nature, that can be clearly seen in her exhibition titles, such as *Form is Emptiness, Emptiness is Form* (lines from the Heart Sutra), *Sky/Emptiness (Sora/Ku)*, or *72 Kō* (ancient Japanese calendar system that divides the year into 72 seasons). The artist’s family background is also a great influence: her father is American, while her mother is a Japanese descendant of Bizen swordsmiths, and the artist spent her childhood in both rural Northern California and at the Buddhist temple overseen by her maternal grandfather in Japan. Ando skillfully fuses the traditional and the contemporary, the industrial and the natural, East and West, reflecting the essence of nature in her work with refinement and sensitivity.

Her recent solo exhibitions include *Form is Emptiness, Emptiness is Form*, Asia Society Texas Center (Houston, 2019); *Miya Ando*, Sundaram Tagore Gallery (New York, 2019); and *Clouds*, Kantor Gallery (Los Angeles, 2019). She has held solo exhibitions at institutions including The Noguchi Museum (New York, 2018), as well as participated in group exhibitions at the Haus der Kunst (Munich, 2019) and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA, Los Angeles, 2017). In 2015, her large-scale installation, *Emptiness The Sky (Shou Sugi Ban)*, was shown at the *Frontiers*

*Reimagined* exhibition, an official collateral event of the 56th Venice Biennale. Her work is in many notable public and private collections, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA, Los Angeles), the Haus der Kunst (Munich), and the Berkowitz Collection (Miami). Ando has also created numerous public works of art, including a memorial sculpture entitled *After 9/11*, a work which has been installed permanently in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London, and for which she was shortlisted for the Marsh Award for Excellence in Public Sculpture in 2015.



Miya Ando  
*The Cathedral*  
 (The Shrine of Trees, The Sisters and The Mother)  
 2018  
 Silk chiffon, charred redwood, acrylic rods  
 304.8 x 320.0 x 320.0 cm

Miya Ando  
*Alchemy (Shou Sugi Ban) Cube 3.19.12.9*  
 2019  
 Solid charred redwood, silver nitrate  
 30.5 x 30.5 x 30.5 cm

## MAKI Gallery / Tennoz, Tokyo

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Opening hours: 11:00 ~ 18:00 (Fri./ 12:30 ~ 20:00)  
 Closed on Sundays and Mondays

\*For further inquiries, please contact