

Takako Yamaguchi: New Paintings **November 5, 2026 – January 9, 2027**

Ortuzar is pleased to present **“Takako Yamaguchi: New Paintings,”** the artist’s third solo exhibition with the gallery, introducing her latest series of paintings.

The works hone a pared-down vocabulary of white-on-white geometric forms resembling modernist abstraction. While vaguely reminiscent, at first glance, of 20th-century avant-garde sculptural reliefs—from Neo-Concrete artists in Brazil to the ZERO group in post-war Europe—Yamaguchi’s paintings are meticulously rendered by hand from photographic sources. Adopting the language of trompe l’oeil, these genre-blending works pit the baggage of Minimalism and Photorealism against each other in order to reopen the dead ends of these historical movements.

Each painting begins with the fabrication of a plaster bas relief by another artist. These sculptures are then documented by the photographer typically hired by Yamaguchi, lit and handled as any other artwork. She then continues the concept’s circular logic by painstakingly translating the source image back into paint, effectively completing a cycle from object, to photographic image, back to object (which is then returned again to an image through the completed work’s documentation). Painted on brown linen and bumped slightly off the wall by a cleat, the works both cast a shadow and are haloed by warm reflected light, causing the paintings to oscillate ambiguously between abstraction and representation, illusionistic surface and raw material.

Emerging in the late 1970s, Yamaguchi came of age at a moment both modernist abstraction and Photorealism had reached a kind of historical impasse. The monochrome had pursued painting toward an apparent endpoint of reduction, while Photorealism’s translation of photographic information into paint could seem similarly terminal: a strategy so overreliant on its virtuosity that it often registered as kitsch or gimmick. Relieved of the demand to advance an avant-garde project or arrive anywhere new, these discarded movements can instead be misused and recombined, with the hope that through Yamaguchi’s overinvestment of labor, new meanings might emerge.

Yamaguchi has described the paintings as “having to do with time, wasting time, and providing evidence of time wasted.” Working against a present that equates productivity with speed and abundance, Yamaguchi perversely languishes over each modulation of white, cast shadow, reflected light, and illusionistic edge to create a visual effect of near-effortlessness. These new paintings belong to an extended sequence that has culminated in sixty five paintings in total, each repeating the same 18-by-24-inch format. Accumulated together, their formal restraint betrays a false modesty that operates strategically within the overcrowded attention economy in which they are forced to operate.

The stylistic eclecticism of Yamaguchi’s nearly five-decade practice can obscure a deeper conceptual consistency. From her early engagement with Pattern and Decoration to her subsequent adaptation of styles as wide-ranging as Lucas Cranach the Elder, Art Nouveau, or spiritualist painters like Agnes Pelton, Yamaguchi has repeatedly gravitated toward aesthetic languages whose claims to seriousness have been compromised by their associations with bad taste. While her longstanding engagement with craft, in particular, has provided a means of troubling the distinction between the intellectual work of art and the labor required to produce it, this series further complicates this hierarchy by positioning her within, rather than above, a chain of production. As with many of her ideas, the series’ conceit is taken on with what she concedes is a certain degree of “irresponsibility,” by which she means that the ramifications of combining such loaded references are not necessarily thought through or inherently meaningful. In an inversion of the conventions of Conceptual Art, she skimps on intent and refuses to outsource the most laborious stage of the process: the repetitive work of execution, which becomes the privileged site of creation.

Takako Yamaguchi (b. 1952, Okayama, Japan) lives and works in Los Angeles, California. She received a BA from Bates College in Lewiston, Maine in 1975 and a MFA from the University of California, Santa Barbara in 1978. She has held solo exhibitions at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2025); as-is.la, Los Angeles (2024, 2022); Ortuzar Projects, New York (2025, 2023); Ramiken Crucible, New York (2021); Egan and Rosen, New York (2021); STARS Gallery, Los Angeles (2021); Cardwell Jimmerson Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2010); Nevada Museum, Reno (2007); Kathryn Markel Fine Arts (2007); and Jan Baum Gallery, Los Angeles (2006). She has been included in institutional surveys including "Circularity," Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, Nevada (2026); "In Context: Takako Yamaguchi," San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco (2025); "Whitney Biennial 2024: Even Better Than the Real Thing," Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2024); "Ordinary People: Photorealism and the Work of Art since 1968," Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2024); "Infinite Regress: Mystical Abstraction from the Permanent Collection and Beyond," Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, Missouri (2024); "The Ocean," Bergen Kunsthall, Bergen, Norway (2021); "With Pleasure: Pattern and Decoration in American Art 1972-1985," Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles and Hessel Museum of Art, Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York (2019-2021); "Transcendence: Abstraction & Symbolism in the American West," Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, Logan, Utah (2015); "California Echoes: Women Inspired by Nature," Orange County Center for Contemporary Art, Santa Ana, California (2007); and "L.A. Post-Cool," San José Museum of Art, San José, California (2002). She is the recipient of an Anonymous Was A Woman Award (2024). Her work is in the collections of the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, Nevada; Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, Logan, Utah; Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, California; Eli Broad Family Foundation, Los Angeles; the Lynda and Stuart Resnick Collection, Los Angeles; Deutsche Bank, New York; and Art Bridges Foundation, Bentonville, Arkansas, among others.