



# Yayoi Kusama (Contemporary Artists)

*Laura Hoptman*

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Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama (b.1929) has pursued her principal themes of infinity, self-representation, sexuality and compulsive repetition since she took the New York art world by storm in the late 1950s with her 'Infinity Nets': a series of heroically-scaled paintings covered in endlessly repetitive net-like patterns, which won the admiration of artists ranging from Barnett Newman to the discriminating Donald Judd. In Kusama's installations and sculptures she compulsively covers every surface, either in polka dots (Infinity Mirror Room, 1965), mirrors (Endless Love Show, 1966) or phallus-like protrusions (Violet Obsession, 1994). This book signifies the first ever monograph on the astounding 40-year career of this established, deeply daring and tirelessly experimental artist, who represented Japan at the Venice Biennale in 1993. It was published to coincide with an exhibition in 2000 at the Serpentine Gallery. Overall, Kusama is internationally respected for her soft sculptures and psychedelic installations, through which she also explores themes of love and obsession throughout her work, in all its diversity: from her net-like pattern paintings begun in 1959, to her Pop-inspired love happenings in the 1960s, to installations whose every surface has been completed boundlessly by a complex but always distinct pattern. A visionary whose work is unique in the panorama of post-war art, Kusama is known not only as an artist but also as a fashion designer, poet, novelist and film-maker -- all documented in this uniquely comprehensive monograph. American art historian and Museum of Modern Art curator Laura Hoptman examines in her Survey the gradual transitions in the artist's work, from painting to performance to installation, in the context of her international artistic contemporaries. Japanese poet and critic Akira Tatehata discusses with the artist her own evolving relationship with her work and how it is received in Eastern and Western contexts. German-born art historian Udo Kultermann focuses on the artist's seminal installation work Driving Image (1959-64), which he exhibited in Essen, Germany, in 1966. For Artist's Choice, the artist has selected tanka poems by Takuboku Ishikawa (1886-1912), a renowned Japanese poet who, like Kusama, combined the expression of personal suffering with great formal innovations in his work.

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