

Kaz Oshiro

Nothing New Under the Sun

Artist	Kaz Oshiro
Exhibition Title	<i>Nothing New Under the Sun</i>
Dates	November 18 (Sat.), 2023 - January 13 (Sat.), 2024
Location	MAKI Gallery / Tennoz II, Tokyo



Top:

California Calligraphy (Sophia III), 2023, acrylic and polyurethane on stretched canvas, 61.0 x 91.5 x 5.5 cm

Bottom (left to right):

California Calligraphy (Aleph), 2023, acrylic and polyurethane on stretched canvas, 61.0 x 46.0 x 5.5 cm

California Calligraphy (Black Sun), 2023, acrylic and polyurethane on stretched canvas, 61.0 x 46.0 x 5.5 cm

California Calligraphy (Scorpio Rising), 2023, acrylic and polyurethane on stretched canvas, 61.0 x 46.0 x 5.5 cm

California Calligraphy (Smoke and Mirrors I), 2023, acrylic and polyurethane on stretched canvas, 61.0 x 46.0 x 5.5 cm

Photos: Taka Nonaka-Hill

MAKI Gallery is pleased to announce *Nothing New Under the Sun*, a major solo exhibition by Los Angeles-based artist Kaz Oshiro, marking a momentous return to Tennoz since his last solo show three years ago. Born in postwar, American-occupied Okinawa, Oshiro relocated to California soon after graduating high school. His practice offers unique interpretations of various movements enshrined in art historical canon, such as Pop Art, Minimalism, and Abstract Expressionism, while continuing to contemplate the fundamental question of what it means to make a work of art.

Nothing New Under the Sun presents new iterations of Oshiro's signature three-dimensional canvas works, which perfectly imitate mundane objects like amplifiers, steel beams, and trash bins. In addition, the show introduces *California Calligraphy*, a series of abstract paintings inspired by the streaks and scribbles left on dust-covered car bodies across smog-filled Los Angeles. While Oshiro has made similar works in the past to complement his more sculptural installations, this exhibition marks the first occasion that these paintings take center stage as an independent body of work.

Each corner of the *California Calligraphy* paintings bears a gentle curvature, enabling the surfaces to blend seamlessly with the edges. Their curvilinear forms and distinctly reflective finish—which Oshiro painstakingly developed through trial and error—are reminiscent of a car body, generating an indescribable, unique presence that distinguishes the works from conventional paintings. Upon these polished surfaces, the artist applies car wax with brushes and other tools to construct his abstract compositions, then airbrushes paint on the entire surface to simulate a fine layer of dust. Once the paint dries, he removes the wax, allowing the underlying image to emerge in a subtle and elusive manner, visible only from specific angles. These images are quietly evocative of pre-modern visual languages, such as those found in ancient religions, astrology, and abstract symbolism in archaeological sites around the world—all elements Oshiro has encountered over years of contemplating what it means to “create” something.



California Calligraphy (Sophia III), 2023 (detail), Photo: Taka Nonaka-Hill

At first glance, *California Calligraphy* may seem to deviate from Oshiro's previous works, which meticulously replicate everyday objects down to the finest details. Nevertheless, the artist has always considered the dust, stains, and scratches he intentionally applies to amplifiers, trash bins, and steel beams as part of his abstract expression. Oshiro firmly acknowledges the transformative impact the Abstract Expressionist movement and the "death of painting" had on the medium—yet as he continues to seek the true essence and meaning of painting, he maintains the belief that the ultimate purpose of art is the pursuit of abstract ideas. His practice represents a continuous endeavor to create work that aligns with such inner convictions, and this new series embodies the artist's unwavering commitment to abstraction more strongly than ever before.

In contrast to Western art tradition, which emphasizes an artist's individual style, Oshiro places great value on the corporeality of using his own body to make art, prioritizing the physical act of creation over a desire for recognition by others. From a reluctance to boldly assert his artistic ideas, Oshiro purposefully forges pieces that may not immediately be recognized as works of art—a practice the artist openly refers to as "passive abstract expression."

This exhibition signifies an important milestone in Oshiro's extensive creative journey, one culminating in the realization of—in his view—an ideal form of abstract painting. While his approach may diverge from conventional Western art paradigms, the energy he has invested in his creations is immeasurable. Through his deep understanding of art history, keen conceptual insight, steadfast devotion to abstract expression, and impeccable technique, the artist has given life to a distinctive body of work that could only be crafted by his hands alone.

Please take this opportunity to experience Oshiro's captivating new works, which quietly yet compellingly challenge the very nature of art through their sheer existence, and invite viewers to explore the liminal space between abstraction and representation, where consciousness and subconsciousness intersect.

Written by Haruna Takeda



Fender Bandmaster Head III

2023

Acrylic and Bondo on stretched canvas

20.0 x 61.0 x 25.5 cm



Trash Bin #22
2023
Acrylic on stretched canvas
102.0 x 51.0 x 51.0 cm



Untitled Steel Beams (Twin, Vertical)
2023
Acrylic on stretched canvas
122.0 x 30.5 x 15.0 cm each

Kaz Oshiro

Born in 1967 in Okinawa, Japan and currently based in Los Angeles, California, Kaz Oshiro received both his BA and MFA from California State University in 1998 and 2002, respectively. Oshiro's work investigates the core essence of art through the lens of various dichotomies like sculpture/painting, abstraction/figuration, and reality/illusion, while simultaneously referring to such artistic movements as Pop Art, Minimalism, and Abstract Expressionism.

Oshiro's signature cabinets, suitcases, guitar amps, and so forth, are reproduced so impeccably that at first glance, they do not appear to be works of art. Yet the viewer's perspective is upended once they realize the objects' true nature as painted fabrications, as if the sight of canvas stretched over a wooden frame is proof of their legitimacy as artworks. Moreover, the signs of wear and tear that further emphasize the "reality" of the works display a meticulous attention to detail in the vein of Hyperrealism. However, when the viewer turns their focus to these stains and scratches, they also reveal themselves to be brilliantly calculated, abstract expressionist gestures, akin to a Pollock or a de Kooning.

In this way, Oshiro's works oscillate between opposing elements, often inviting confusion in the viewer. Yet at the same time, they offer an opportunity to reevaluate the conventional definitions and qualities attributed to fine art.

Oshiro's recent solo exhibitions include *Republic*, MAKI Gallery (Tokyo, 2020); *96375*, Nonaka-Hill, (Los Angeles, 2020); *Steel Unforged*, galerie frank elbaz (Paris, 2017); and *A STANDARD*, Honor Fraser Gallery (Los Angeles, 2017). In 2014, his solo exhibition, *Chasing Ghosts*, was held at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA, Los Angeles). His work has been shown in group exhibitions at various institutions including The FLAG Art Foundation (New York, 2015), the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis, 2012), and the Hammer Museum (Los Angeles, 2005). In 2022, Oshiro participated in the Aichi Triennale, one of the largest international contemporary art festivals in Japan, and in 2014, his work was included in *Deception II: Into the Future*, a traveling group show held at Bunkamura: The Museum (Tokyo), Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art (Hyogo), and Nagoya City Art Museum (Aichi). Oshiro's work is part of many notable public and private collections, such as the Fonds national d'art contemporain (Paris), Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA, Los Angeles), the Rubell Museum (Miami), and the Zabłudowicz Collection (London).

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