



Susan Inglett Gallery is pleased to present *Moe's Meat Market*, an exhibition of historical work by ROBERT KOBAYASHI (1925–2015). *Moe's Meat Market* is the first presentation of work by Kobayashi in the Gallery. We will be publishing an online catalogue for the exhibition featuring reminiscences from his wife, Kate Keller Kobayashi, and their daughter, Misa Kobayashi.

Robert Kobayashi trained at art schools in his native Honolulu and in New York before beginning work at the Museum of Modern Art, NYC as caretaker for their Japanese House in 1954. His position at the museum created opportunities to grow as an artist during a defining moment in the New York art world, participating in contemporary exhibitions in artist-run galleries like Brata and Camino Galleries and with art dealer Sam Koontz. The work shown in these spaces garnered positive reviews from critics at major publications including *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*. In the decades that followed, Kobayashi sought to move away and

differentiate himself from his abstract peers by pursuing materials and techniques that more closely aligned with his personal interests.

The year before his retirement from MoMA in 1978, Kobayashi bought a building with his wife, Kate Keller Kobayashi, on Elizabeth Street in Little Italy. Taking over an existing butcher shop, the space assumed various guises, ultimately settling into its role as gallery operating under the moniker, *Moe's Meat Market*. Avoiding commercial art settings, Kobayashi preferred to present his pieces at *Moe's Meat Market*, and by 2009, the space served exclusively to exhibit his own work. A local landmark, he entranced passersby with rotating window displays and innovative presentations of his art, placing work directly on the floor or hanging it from the shop's original meat hooks. The gallery kept limited public hours according to the dictates of whim rather than commerce.

Kobayashi drew his energy and materials from the streets of Little Italy developing a unique style of mixed media dubbed by writer Michael Florescu, *clouage*, taken from the French verb "to nail." Using found metals and detritus, he cobbled together 2 and 3-D works from discarded ceiling tin as well as beer and Cafe Bustelo cans. Through bricolage, he depicts intimate moments from the surrounding neighborhood. In *Summer Window* (2010), a nearly empty room features a singular vanity next to a window with a verdant view. Sculptures of fresh flowers in vases, like those from the flower markets in Little Italy, connect with his metal still-lives of glasses and fruit on tabletops. These neglected materials and forgotten everyday city sights are elevated by Kobayashi's distinctive touch.

Beyond these quotidian scenes, Kobayashi draws the eye back to the found materials so central to and characteristic of his work. The hammered surface of the tin tiles gives his pieces an almost pointillist appearance. From a distance, the raised nails and the geometric placement of the metalwork create an abstract pattern to be admired as an object unto itself. His sourced materials and subject matter result in examples that are emblematic of both the artist and his surroundings.

Although *Moe's Meat Market* closed in 2017, two years following Kobayashi's death, the vibrant energy and memory of the gallery live on through his work. As Elizabeth Street now bustles with high-end, trendy shops, Kobayashi's art embodies a bygone era of Little Italy, a poignant reminder in the present day of New York's ever-evolving cultural landscape.

ROBERT KOBAYASHI was born in 1925 in Honolulu, HI. After serving in the military during World War II, he was encouraged to pursue a career as an artist by his sister, Fumi, attending both the Honolulu Academy of Art and the Brooklyn Museum School of Art. In 1988, Kobayashi had his first major solo exhibition, *Tattooed Angel: Paintings and Sculpture by Robert Kobayashi*, at the Nassau County Museum of Fine Art, Roslyn, NY. Exhibitions since that time include *Inventing Downtown: Artist-Run Galleries in New York City, 1952-1965*, Grey Art Gallery, New York University, NYC; *Hawaii to New York*, Contemporary Museum at First Hawaiian Center, Honolulu, HI; and *Robert Kobayashi: Moonflowers*, New York University Broadway Windows, NYC. His work can be found in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, NYC; the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY; the Contemporary Museum, Honolulu, HI; and the Nassau Museum of Art, Roslyn, NY, among others. He died in his hometown of Honolulu in 2015.

Robert Kobayashi: *Moe's Meat Market* will be on view at the gallery located at 522 West 24 Street Tuesday to Saturday 10AM to 6 PM. For additional information please contact Susan Inglett Gallery at 212 647 9111 or info@inglettgallery.com.

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