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Tadasky (Tadasuke Kuwayama, b.1935)

#D-133

acrylic on canvas

signed, titled and dated 1966 on the reverse, framed

Dimensions

With frame: H. 175cm x W. 174.5cm (69" x 68¾")

Without frame: H. 173.5cm x W. 173cm (68½" x 68¼")

Provenance: Jiro Yoshihara collection, purchased at either the Gutai Pinacoteca, Osaka, or Tokyo Gallery in 1966

Tadasky (Tadasuke Kuwayama) was born in Nagoya the youngest of eleven sons. His father owned a successful building company which specialised in constructing Shinto shrines in the traditional manner.

This is a privileged and respected occupation demanding the highest level of construction. Tadasky

spent many hours in the family carpentry workshop and learned carefully guarded carpentry skills and techniques from the talented craftsmen working under his father. The symmetry of Shinto architecture left a lasting impression and he drew upon this influence and knowledge throughout his career.

Looking at one of my paintings is for me like entering a traditional Shinto shrine. Because they are both so simple and symmetrical, the impact is very powerful. I am not a believer, but some people would call this experience "spiritual."

Interview to Julie Karabenick, 2013

Japanese art schools and academies in the early 1960's were still quite traditional and many of the new emerging styles of art were often discouraged. Tadasky believed he would not be able to follow his dream and paint using mainly geometric forms and therefore in 1961 he decided to emigrate to the USA on a student visa. Shortly after his arrival in America he entered a competition held at the Art Students League where he won first prize and was immediately granted a scholarship. He was also spotted by the director of Brooklyn Museum Art School who offered him a further scholarship. However, regardless of receiving free tuition Tadasky needed to supplement his income and did this by using his carpentry skills to make stretchers for other artists such as Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein and the New York based galleries Betty Parsons and Leo Castelli.

Tadasky was deeply impressed by the modern forms of New York's architecture and was inspired to dedicate his painting to geometric shapes, particularly the circle. He especially enjoyed his studies at the Brooklyn Museum Art School as they allowed him to work from his home studio where he could spend long hours painting without the constraints of the School's schedule. In order to realise his dream of painting as many concentric perfect circles as possible he developed a particular tool. Tadasky constructed a turntable-like surface where the canvas would lie flat with a narrow bench hovering over it for him to sit on. He would then carefully place his paintbrush on the surface of the canvas and paint while steadily revolving it; a process which demands great steadiness, concentration and control. By 1964 he managed to master his wheel and this allowed him to start experimenting with the juxtaposition of vivid colours in concentric circles.

In the same year Tadasky's work was featured in Life magazine's article, Op Art: A dizzying fascinating

style of painting and began to be closely associated with the Optical Art movement. William Seitz (1914-1974), curator of the Museum of Modern Art, visited Tadasky's studio and chose six paintings for the seminal MoMA exhibition 'The Responsive Eye' in 1965. Immediately his work was obtained by many important art collectors, MoMA acquired two of his paintings for their permanent collection and the famous Kootz Gallery seeing his potential held two very successful solo shows.

In 1966 he returned to Japan and held a solo show at the Tokyo Gallery, Tokyo. The exhibition was attended by Yoshihara Jiro (1905-1972) the founder of the Gutai movement who bought several pieces. The two found common ground through their preoccupation with the circle and Tadasky was invited to join the now famous Gutai movement giving him the opportunity to hold a solo show at the Gutai Pinacoteca in Osaka later that year.

In 1969 Tadasky bought a 7-story building in Soho, New York where he lived and sublet spaces to other artists. In 1972 he built a large kiln in the basement of the building which became the Grand Street Potters, the largest kiln in New York at that time. During that period he experimented with pottery but soon returned to painting and begun to use airbrush techniques giving a soft diffused finish to his until then crisp circles.

Between 1986 and 1993 he lived and worked in Japan where he continued using airbrushed circles suffused with dots and overlapping squares.

The creation of these works requires deep concentration before the start and Tadasky states he holds a clear picture of the finished work in his head throughout the creative process not stopping until completed. For him the painting process is a joyful experience.

When writing about Tadasky's work, Donald Kuspit (b.1935), the renowned American art critic, emphasises: the circles are pure modern abstractions, yet the combination of the brightly coloured concentric rings centred in the square canvas is reminiscent of mandalas, invoking a spiritual connotation; a Zen sensibility.

Tadasky is still active today and continues to use his original turntable and bench technique, maintaining studios in Chelsea, Manhattan and in Ellenville, New York.

Works by the artist can be found in the collections of:

Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York
Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, Maryland
Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas at Austin
Boca Raton Museum of Art, Florida
Brandeis University, Waltham
Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, Ohio
Fralin Museum of Art, University of Virginia, Charlottesville
Gutai Pinacotheca, Osaka
Hallmark Art Collection, Kansas City Missouri
Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, Massachusetts
Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, Indiana
JPMorgan Chase Art Collection, New York City
Krannert Art Museum, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami, Florida
Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Buenos Aires, Argentina
Museum of Contemporary Art, Nagaoka
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas
Museum of Modern Art, New York
Nagoya City Art Museum, Nagoya
Ohara Museum of Art, Kurashiki
Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix Arizona
Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, New Jersey
Roland Gibson Gallery, State University of New York at Potsdam
Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts
Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska, Lincoln
State University of New York, Potsdam
Takamatsu City Museum, Kagawa

University of Illinois, Champaign

University of Iowa Museum of Art, Iowa City

University of Miami, Miami

University of Nebraska, Lincoln

University of Virginia Art Museum (The Fralin), Charlottesville

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut

Selected Solo Exhibitions:

1965 Kootz Gallery, New York

1966 Tokyo Gallery, Tokyo

Gutai Pinacotheca, Osaka

1967 Fischbach Gallery, New York

1969 Fischbach Gallery, New York

1970 Artisan Gallery, Houston

1989 Tokyo Gallery, Tokyo

2008 Sideshow Gallery, Brooklyn

2012 David Richard Gallery, Santa Fe

2015 D. Wigmore Fine Art, New York City

Selected Group Exhibitions and Awards:

1965 The Responsive Eye, Museum of Modern Art, New York

Kinetic and Optic Art Today Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo

Highlights of the 1964-65 Art Season, The Larry Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield

Contemporary American Painting and Sculpture, Krannert Art Museum, Champaign

Japanese Artists Abroad, National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo

Pop and Op, traveling exhibition, Castelli Gallery, New York

Kinetics and Optics, travelling exhibition, Museum of Modern Art, New York

1966 Annual Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia

The New Japanese Painting and Sculpture, traveling exhibition, The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Creative Arts Awards, 1957-1966, Rose Art Museum, Waltham

1967 17th Annual Susakuten, Asahi Shinbun, Tokyo

The Harry N. Abrams Family Collection, The Jewish Museum, New York

1968 Homage to Albers, Washington University Gallery of Art, St. Louis

1969 Paintings from the Albright-Knox Gallery Collection, National Museum of Art, Buenos Aires

1972 Recent Accessions, 1966-72, Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indiana

1977 The James A. Michener Collection: Twentieth Century American Paintings, University Art Museum, University of Texas, Austin

William C. Seitz Memorial Collection, Princeton University Art Museum

2004 Twister: Moving through Color, Blanton Art Museum, Austin

2005 Extreme Abstraction, Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo

2006 Op Art Revisited, Albany State Museum, Albany

2007 Optic Nerve: Perceptual Art of the 1960s, Columbus Museum of Art in Columbus, Ohio

Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn, NY: "Pop and Op,"

Freedom to Experiment: American Abstraction, 1945-1975, D. Wigmore, Fine Art Gallery, New York City

2008 Resounding Spirit: Japanese Contemporary Art of the 1960s, traveling exhibition, Gibson Gallery and State University of New York, Potsdam

Pop and Op, Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn

Four Optic Visionaries, D. Wigmore Fine Art, New York

2009 Exploring Black and White: The 1930s Through the 1960s, D. Wigmore Fine Art, New York

2011 Structured Color, D. Wigmore Fine Art, New York

2012 A Global Exchange. Geometric Abstraction Since 1950, Museo de Arte Contemporaneo de Buenos Aires, Argentina

Adapting and Adopting, Lowe Art Museum, Coral Gables, Florida

2013 Dynamo: Space and Vision in Art, from Today Back to 1913, Grand Palais, Paris

Gene Davis—Tadasky: Time, Dimension and Color Explored, D. Wigmore Fine Art in New York City

2015 "The Responsive Eye" Fifty Years After, David Richard Gallery, Santa Fe

Op Art in America, Hallmark Art Collection, Kansas City

1960s Hard Edge Painting, D. Wigmore Fine Art, New York

Geometric Obsession, Museo de Arte Contemporaneo de Buenos Aires, Argentina

2016 The Illusive Eye: an International Survey on Kinetic and Op Art, El Museo del Barrio, New York

For a similar example exhibited in the MoMA exhibition of 1966 curated by Dorothy Miller and William Lieberman see: The New Japanese Painting and Sculpture, 1966, p.93

and for a video interview go to: <http://www.hallmarkartcollection.com/videos/>

