

Press release
August 23, 2021

Shibunkaku presents

Suda Kokuta: Abstractions

August 23 (Monday)—September 4 (Saturday), 2021

As this summer is coming to a close, Shibunkaku Online Shop presents an exploration of a realm within imagination: the abstract world of Suda Kokuta (1906–1990). Suda, who garnered steadily growing recognition in Japan and internationally throughout the postwar period, has been a fixture of the Kansai art scene since his move there in the early 1940s. Well-connected to other artists, including Yoshihara Jirō, Morita Shiryū, Hasegawa Saburō or Tsutaka Waichi, Suda nevertheless was an individualist who went his own way (declining Yoshihara's offer to join Gutai, for instance).

This exhibition centers on Suda's abstract works, an approach that the painter engaged in from around 1948/9 to the late 1970s. The dated works in this exhibition range from 1959 to 1965, and seems likely that most, though perhaps not all, of the featured works stem from during or around the 1960s. Suda's abstractions are not easy to categorize but it is telling in many, if not most, of them he goes against the notion of painting as a flat projection space. Rather, that flatness needs to be challenged, which Suda does by either applying his materials in thick impasto layers, or adding objects such as pebbles or small stones to create three-dimensional surfaces.

Another technique he employs to great effect is embossing: objects are pressed against the paper ground, often from the back, resulting in round or rectangular impressions and bulges that Suda arranges into intricate patterns, sometimes even pinching holes into the paper (again, often from the back so that the torn paper projects towards the viewer). Suda exploits the particularities of the material, as in the case of paper which lends itself to perforation or deformation. The three-dimensional aspect is also used with oil colors that allow for layers that can be built up or scraped off again, or for the integration of unusual materials. In his abstract works, Suda thus created not so much paintings but things—vaguely three-dimensional objects that neither represent a reflection of the outside world, nor the image of the artist's inner being, but objects that add to the world in their own right—in being nothing but themselves.

About Suda Kokuta (1906–1990)

Painter from Saitama Prefecture. Suda was a prolific participant at major national exhibitions such as Bunten and Nitten but also exhibited internationally. His representational as well as abstract paintings are characterized by a vigorous style, vibrantly distinct and recognizable. Suda's work extends to calligraphy and ceramics. He received the Culture Award of the Kodansha publishing corporation for his illustrations for Shiba Ryōtarō's *On the Highways*. Member of the Kokuga art association

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About Shibunkaku

Established in 1937 in Kyoto, Shibunkaku offers a unique sense of aesthetics and appreciation of art that transcending cultural and geographical borders, periods, and genres. Our expertise is rooted in early modern and modern Japanese fine art with an emphasis on calligraphy and painting. In addition, we have expanded into postwar and contemporary art, aiming to count among the leading galleries in Japanese art of highest quality and enduring art historical value. Besides the main gallery in Kyoto, and Shibunkaku owns a space in Ginza, Tokyo.

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