

REYNOLDS GALLERY

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Reynolds Gallery to present new and recent work by artist Kiyomi Iwata

The Thread opens February 28, 2020



Kiyomi Iwata
Auric Gauze Three, 2020
Woven *kibiso* embellished with gold leaf
53 x 50 inches

RICHMOND, VA – Reynolds Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of new and recent work by artist Kiyomi Iwata. *The Thread* will premiere with a public reception from 6 to 8pm on February 28, and will remain on view through April 10, 2020.

The Thread is Kiyomi Iwata's first solo exhibition with Reynolds Gallery, though her work has been included in several recent group installations at the gallery. It also marks her second Richmond exhibition since returning to the city after several decades of living in the northeast United States.

Iwata was born in Japan and emigrated to the United States in 1961, first settling in Richmond. Not long after her arrival, she took batik-dying classes at the Virginia Museum of Fine Art's Studio School, an experience which reignited her childhood interest in the arts and introduced Iwata to textiles as a form of creative expression. Since then, Iwata's practice has focused almost entirely on textiles and the many forms that fiber-based arts can take. Between the 1970s and

early 2010s, her semi-sculptural and fully three-dimensional works were created with fine silk organza threads and flexible metal meshes, often containing visual and thematic references to traditional Japanese craft and fine art.

In recent years, Iwata has shifted to using *kibiso* as her primary medium. This unusual material is produced from the first several meters of silk produced by silkworms. Its rough and uneven texture led to the material being historically regarded as refuse, until the Japan-based Tsuruoka Fabric Industry Cooperative identified its potential artistic value in an era of waste-reduction and environmentally conscious initiatives. Iwata's introduction to *kibiso* occurred during a 2015 visit to Japan, around the same time she was resettling in Richmond. Her earliest works produced after her return to Richmond included *kibiso*, and the material has since become the most dominant medium in Iwata's practice.

"I was initially drawn to *kibiso* out of curiosity. Working with this seemingly unfit thread gave me tremendous pleasure and inspiration. Not only am I recycling what was once a cast off material, but it lets me celebrate unexpected beauty from the full spectrum of a silkworm's life's work," says Iwata in

her statement for the exhibition. Through her weaving of the *kibiso*, the artist builds new connections between previously disparate threads of material. In a 2017 statement, Iwata compared this process to the experience of reconnecting with old friends upon her return to Richmond from New York. Viewers may also interpret this coming together of material as a metaphor for the cross-cultural connections which exist within Iwata's work.

Iwata's exhibition brings together nearly a dozen examples of her work, including several pieces created in the past decade alongside a new series of woven works. This impressive selection ranges in scale; from intimate, basket-like works to small- and large-scale wall hangings. Many pieces display loose gridded patterns within their woven *kibiso* structures, immediately conveying Iwata's ability to manipulate her raw materials into intricate compositions that feel both strikingly modern and deeply connected to traditional Japanese aesthetics. Gold embellishments, custom dyeing techniques, and painted elements add an additional layer of complexity and grandeur to the work. The largest hangings span over nine feet in width, replete with delicate tendrils of *kibiso* that extend beyond the edges of the work and contribute an even greater sense of monumentality.

Through her contemporary practice, Kiyomi Iwata contributes to a shared heritage of Japanese artists who have worked to embrace the imperfect and sought to develop processes of creative invention which include a respect for and collaboration with material. With her selective transformation of material, Iwata allows her viewers to appreciate both the changes which can be imposed by an artist and the rustic beauty of the natural *kibiso*.



Kiyomi Iwata
Auric Landing Four, 2020
Woven *kibiso* embellished with 24k gold leaf
59 x 90 x 1.5 inches

About Kiyomi Iwata

Born in Kobe, Japan in 1941, Kiyomi Iwata emigrated to the United States in 1961. She has studied at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Studio School, the Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina, the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in Maine, and the New School for Social Research in New York, NY. Iwata has been featured in numerous solo and group exhibitions at venues in the United States and abroad, including the Renwick Gallery at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C.; the Tilburg Textile Museum in Holland, and the Visual Arts Center of Richmond. Her work is included in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Arts & Design in New York, NY, the Cleveland Museum of Art in Ohio, and is presently on view in the 21st Century Galleries of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond. She is the recipient of several awards and honors, including the National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in 1986. In 2009, Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama presented President Barack Obama with one of Iwata's wall hangings during a state visit to Japan. Iwata currently lives and works in Richmond, Virginia.

About Reynolds Gallery

Based in Richmond, Virginia, Reynolds Gallery has been exhibiting challenging contemporary art since 1977. The gallery was founded by Beverly Reynolds once she identified the need and opportunity for a contemporary art gallery in Richmond. Her first show included Alexander Calder gouaches and Max Ernst drawings. Over the next four decades, Reynolds Gallery grew into one of the most well-known Mid-Atlantic galleries, exhibiting many blue-chip artists like Ellsworth Kelly, John Baldessari, and Sally Mann. In addition, Reynolds Gallery represents regional artists from a rich pool of talent in Virginia, often professors and students from Virginia Commonwealth University.

We continue our founder's legacy of fierce commitment to exhibiting the highest caliber of artists and building lasting relationships with clients to make the experience of looking at art engaging and personal. Our strength lies in the broad spectrum of work we exhibit and our belief that art is a central component to life. Whether you're a seasoned collector, a curious beginner, or simply passing through – we invite you to join us in our mission to inspire every day.