

Yayoi Kusama: Avant-Garde Artist (Born 1929)

"A polka dot has the form of the sun, which is a symbol of the energy of the whole world and our living life, and also the form of the moon, which is calm. Round, soft, colorful, senseless and unknowing. Polka dots can't stay alone; like the communicative life of people, two or three polka dot's become movement. Polka-dots are a way to infinity"



Sometimes called the "princess of polka dots". All of her artwork have one thing in common: she loves to paint polka dots and other patterns. Artist and writer Yayoi Kusama was born in Japan to a well-to-do family who grew seedlings for sale in their nursery. Her family didn't want her to be an artist. Her mother even threw away her paint brushes and tore up her artwork! Still, she would not stop creating, using whatever she could find around the house for art supplies. She even painted with mud! World War II made it difficult for her to create too. Children her age were expected to work long hours in factories making things for the war effort.

Somehow, she found time to create and had her first public exhibition when she was just a teenager. Finally she convinced her parents to let her go to Kyoto to study art.

In 1958, she moved to New York City where there was a thriving art community. Soon she was making all kinds of art; paintings, sculpture and even performance art where the viewer participates. Yayoi started making paintings with repeated curved brush strokes of thick paint over a black or gray canvas. She calls these paintings "Infinity Net Series" and she still likes to make them. She says making them is a form of art therapy, because repeating the brushstrokes over and over makes her feel calm. She wrote to Georgia O'Keeffe for advice and became friends with many artists in America, including Andy Warhol.

In 1973 she moved back to Japan where she also began having psychiatric problems and admitted herself to a hospital. She works from the hospital still today, writing and creating artwork with her signature motif, the dot. She said that as a child her imagination saw polka dots everywhere, and she began using them in her artwork at age 10. She remembers being a child and looking at a tablecloth covered in flowers. Suddenly, the flowers looked like dots, and when she looked around the room she saw dots everywhere! It began to feel like the world was dots and even she had disappeared into them. Now her art is filled with dots and she is one of the world's most successful living artists.