

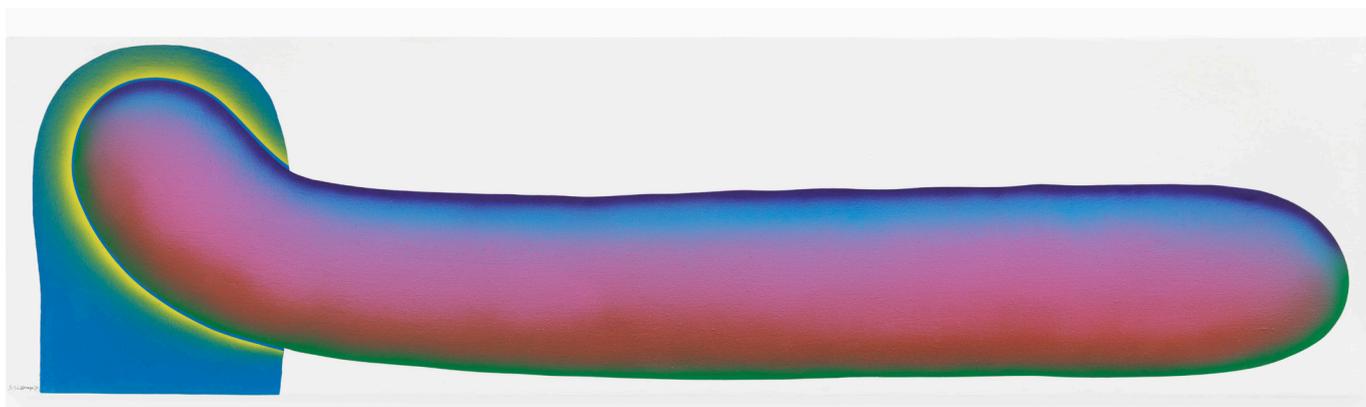
Peder

Sadamasa  
Motonaga

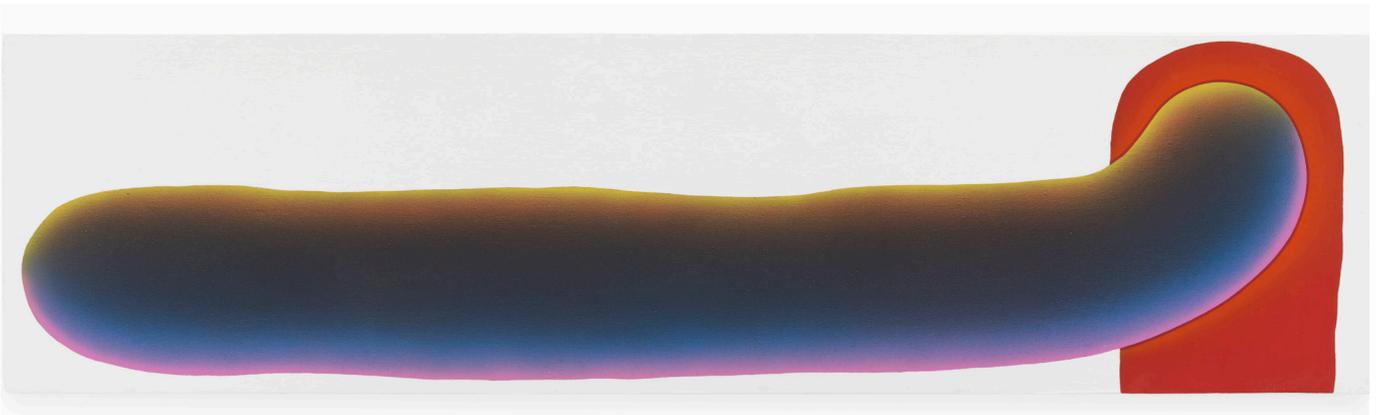
Lund



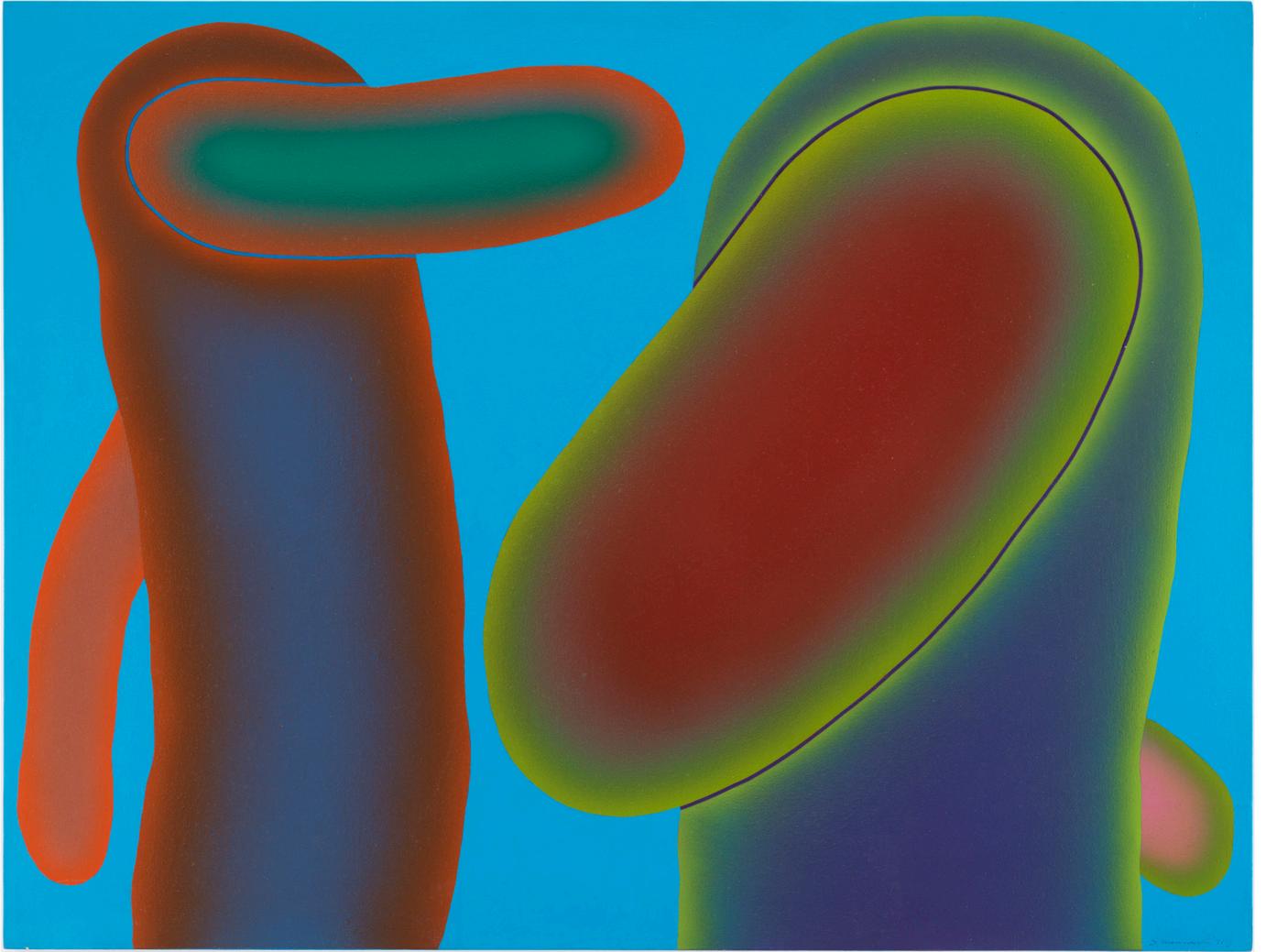
Sadamasa Motonaga  
Sakuhin  
1968  
Acrylic on canvas  
150 × 250 cm, 59 × 98 3/8 inches



Sadamasa Motonaga  
Sakuhin  
1970  
Acrylic on canvas over board  
47 × 171.5 cm, 18 1/2 × 67 1/2 inches



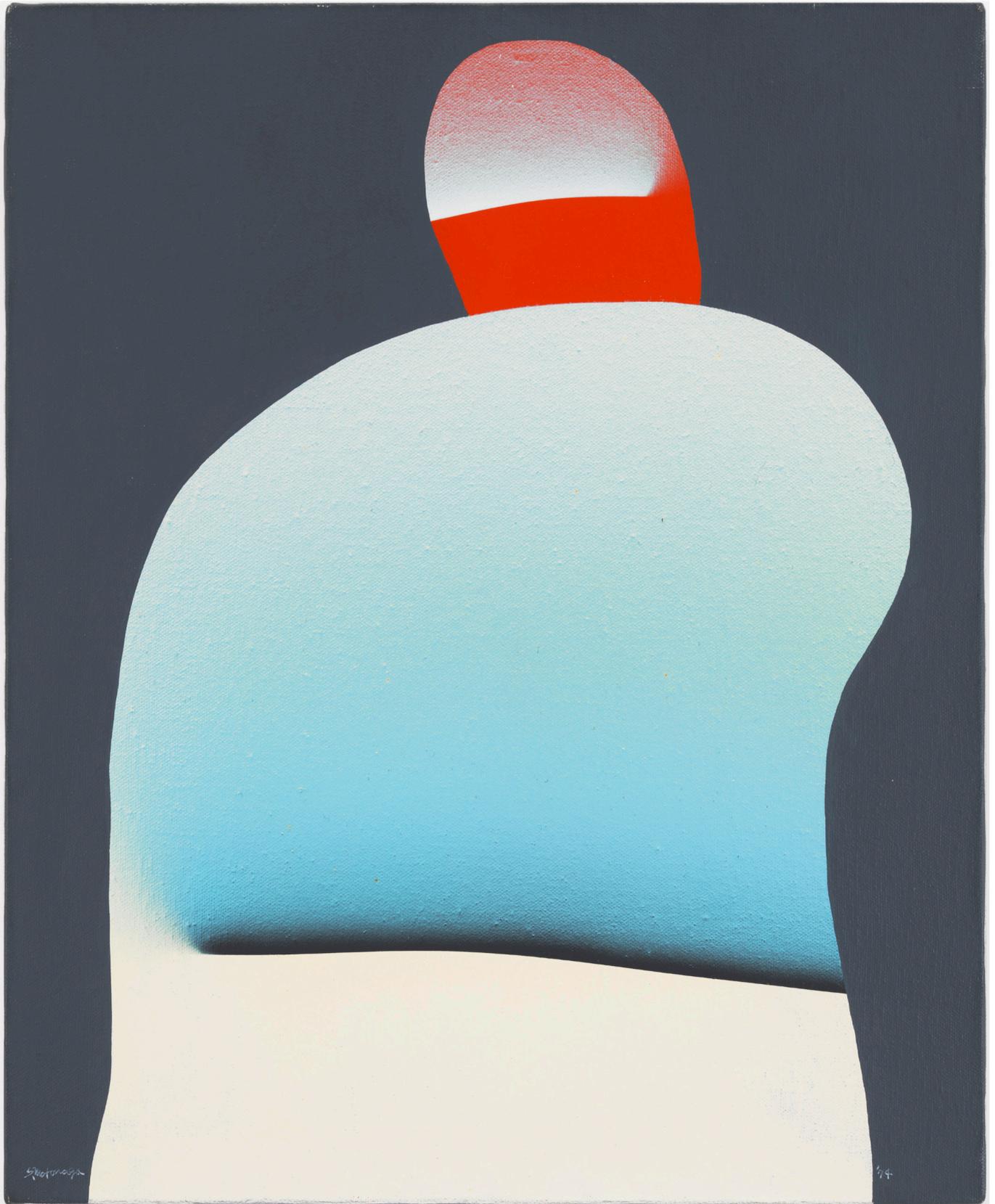
Sadamasa Motonaga  
Sakuhin  
1970  
Acrylic on canvas over board  
47 × 171.5 cm, 18 1/2 × 67 1/2 inches



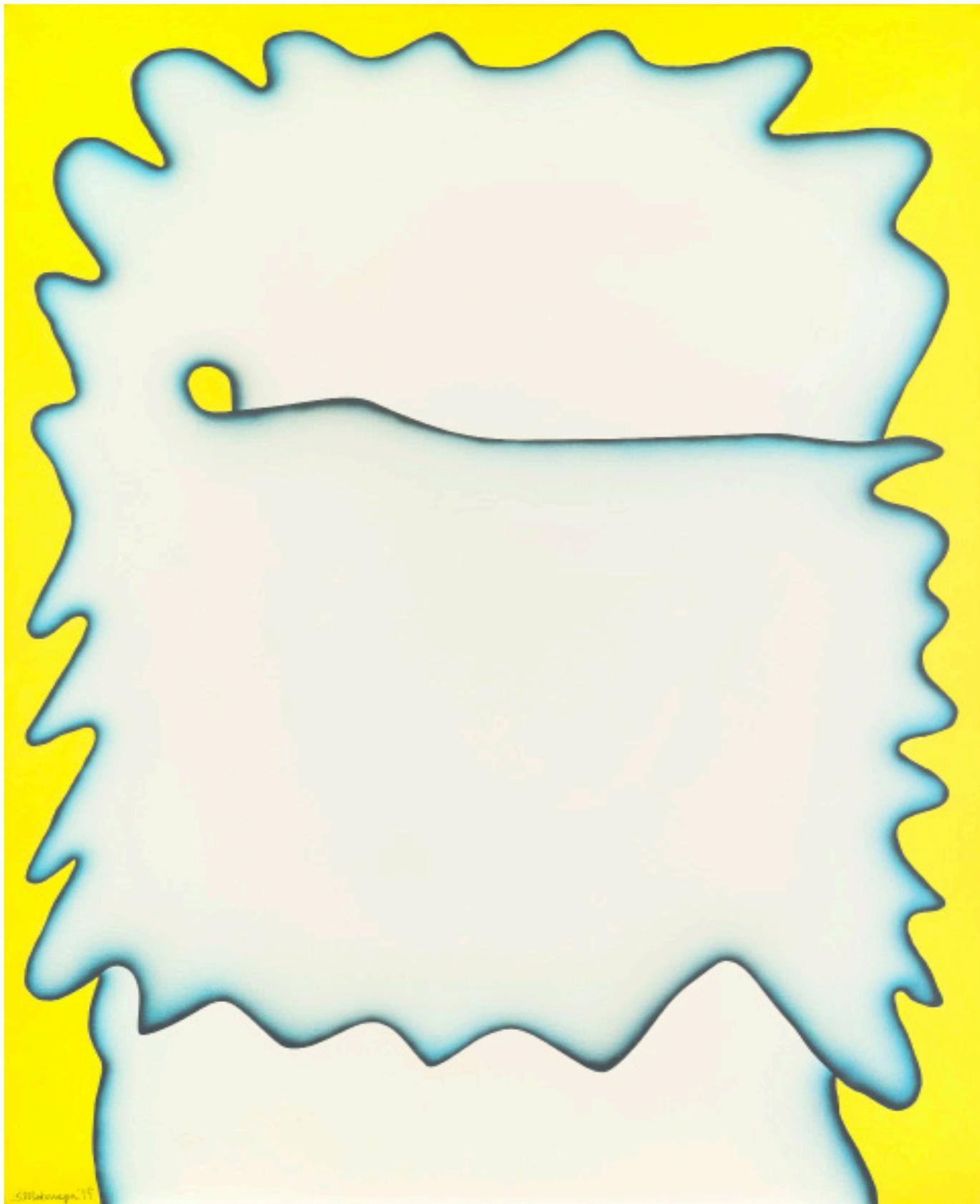
Sadamasa Motonaga  
Untitled  
1971  
Acrylic on canvas over board  
91.5 × 116.5 cm, 36 × 45 7/8 inches



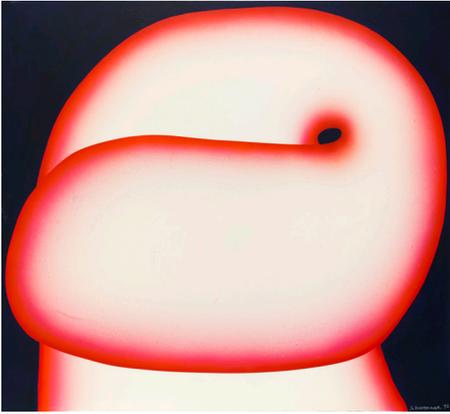
Sadamasa Motonaga  
No. 505  
1972  
Acrylic on canvas over board  
92.5 × 117 cm, 36 3/8 × 46 inches



Sadamasa Motonaga  
Untitled  
1974  
Acrylic on canvas  
45.5 × 37.9 cm, 17 7/8 × 14 7/8 inches



Sadamasa Motonaga  
Sakuhin  
1975  
Acrylic on canvas  
130 × 97 cm, 51 1/8 × 38 1/8 inches



Sadamasa Motonaga was born in 1922 in the Mie Prefecture of Japan. In 1955, he became a member of the legendary Gutai group (1954-72), famous for its pioneering performances and innovative methods in the field of painting, sculpture and installation art. The name of the Gutai group derived from the Japanese word *gutaiteki*, meaning 'concrete' or 'specific', and its members aimed to create an innovative, peerless art that would be one of its kind. Typical for members of this group, Motonaga's work can be seen in opposition to the devastation of the war, as he chose to produce joyful paintings, cheerful sculptures, and lively performances. Motonaga is credited with breaking down the barriers between the genres of manga, graffiti, and fine art, and he was one of the first artists to connect high and low culture in Japan in the late 1950s. His groundbreaking oeuvre was an inspiration for the "Superflat" generation who expanded on his innovative ideas in Japan in the 1990s. His early works share the same vibrant dynamic and energy that are widely praised in the works of his western contemporaries, such as the abstract expressionists Cy Twombly, Jackson Pollock, and Philip Guston while his late works offer a striking reflection of the emerging global convergence of street art, bad art, and high abstraction as for example found in the work of Jean-Michel Basquiat, Keith Haring, Albert Oehlen, and Martin Kippenberger, among others. Parallels to these western counterparts are receiving more focus from curators, scholars, and other art experts; already enjoying legendary status in Asia, appreciation for Motonaga's work and important place in art history is still on the rise in western circles.



Early in his career, Motonaga began developing a visual language that focused on simple forms like dots and triangles which he composed in a playful, nearly comic-like way in thick oil paint. By 1957, his art had become more abstract and consisted of pigment pools in bold colors, which he richly poured on large canvases to create astonishing compositions of explosive splashes, flowing lines and organic shapes. These High-Gutai style paintings received much positive attention and in 1960, the Martha Jackson Gallery in New York presented the first solo exhibition by the artist. Motonaga continued to work with this technique until the mid-1960s. In 1966, he got the opportunity for a residency in New York, sponsored by the Japan Society. During this time, he undertook a major revision of his art and abandoned his highly regarded method in favor of creating new airbrush paintings to gain more control of the composition again and focus on his exploration of forms. At the time, his decision caused consternation with friends and critics, but by following fearlessly his intuition, he created in the second half of his life an impressive body of work which is unique in Japan's art history and paved the way for the approaches of the today highly celebrated next generation of Japanese artists like Takashi Murakami and Yoshitomo Nara.





The presented works were created between 1968–1975 and represent hence one of the most important decades in the artist's production. Similar works from this period are for example held by the National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, Japan; The National Museum of Art, Osaka, Japan; and the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, USA. In 1971, Motonaga withdrew from the Gutai group. However, his work ethos and curiosity to explore new methods for his compositions never stopped, and Motonaga worked daily until he died in Kobe, Japan in 2011.

For his outstanding oeuvre, Motonaga was honored with several prestigious honors, including, the Prize for Excellence at the 6th Contemporary Art Exhibition of Japan, 1964; Grand Prix from the Shincho Foundation and the Grand Prix at the 4th International Biennale Exhibition of Prints, Seoul, 1983; Medal of Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters, 1988; the Japanese Government Medal of Honor with Purple Ribbon for academic and artistic achievement, 1991; Osaka Art Prize, 1992; Kobe Shimbun Peace Prize, 1996; and the Culture Merit Award from the Mie Prefecture, 2002.

Many retrospective exhibitions have been dedicated to the artist in Japan, most notably at the Hyōgo Prefectural Museum of Art, Kobe, 1998; Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Hiroshima, 2003; Nagano Prefectural Museum of Art, Nagano, 2005; and Mie Prefectural Art Museum, Tsu, 2009. In 2015, the Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX, USA, organized the first survey of Motonaga's oeuvre outside Japan, alongside with the work of his Gutai colleague Kazuo Shiraga. In the last decades, several retrospectives of the Gutai Art Association have been held at international institutions such as the National Gallery of Modern Art, Rome, Italy, 1990; Institut Mathildenhöhe, Darmstadt, Germany, 1991; Jeu de Paume, Paris, France, 1999; Museo Cantonale d'Arte, Lugano, Switzerland, 2010; National Art Center, Tokyo, Japan, 2012; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY, USA, 2013; Musee Soulages, Rodez, France, 2018.

Motonaga's work is held by several major museums in Japan, as well as renowned institutions abroad such as the Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX, USA; Glenstone, Potomac, MD, USA; and Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, USA.

List of illustrations:

- 1 Sadamasa Motonaga, *No. 505*, 1972
- 2 Takashi Murakami, *Klein's Pot A*, 1994-97.
- 3 Sadamasa Motonaga and Yokoo at the Canal Street Studio 1967.  
© Motonaga Archive Research Institution Ltd.
- 4 Installation view, *Sadamasa Motonaga*, Peder Lund, Oslo,  
Norway.