

eric firestone gallery



Born in 1943 in New York, Li-lan began rendering written correspondence and paper ephemera from memory in the 1960s—producing dreamlike and meticulously executed *trompe l'oeil* compositions. Imbued with a sense of longing and a desire for communication, her paintings and works on paper are rooted in cross-cultural exchange. As the child of the Chinese-American modernist painter Yun Gee, and the American gallerist Helen Wimmer Gee, Li-lan was immersed in the art world from an early age. After graduating from the legendary High School of the Performing Arts in New York City, Li-lan was drawn to Abstract Expressionism before forging her own distinctive pared-down style. Infusing her practice with her life experiences in Japan, China, and the United States, Li-lan blends Eastern and Western cultural references while melding the aesthetic principles of Surrealism, Pop art, Minimalism, and other art movements.

After spending her early career traveling between New York City and Tokyo alongside her husband, the printmaker Masuo Ikeda, Li-lan settled in East Hampton in the 1970s. The natural daylight of the

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region influenced her output, which until then Li-lan had produced under artificial lights in dark urban studios. Upon moving out to the East End of Long Island, Li-lan's practice transformed:

My bright city colors first turned dark, then darker; then white. The paintings became quiet and full of white light. Slowly, the white of the outside became the white of inside. White paper, pads, and notebooks that had been in the background, gradually became the foreground.

This shift in Li-lan's output is evident in her mature canvases from the 1970s and '80s. These paintings offer birds-eye views of open notebooks, torn pages, legal pads, stamped postcards, and other quotidian records of connection or contemplation. The level of precision that Li-lan achieved in these historic works is especially remarkable given that she executed them freehand from memory.

Li-lan has exhibited extensively in the United States and internationally, particularly in Japan and Taiwan. Her work is found in public collections around the world such as the Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro; Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill; William Benton Museum of Art, Storrs; Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond; Ohara Museum of Art, Kurashiki, Japan; and the Sezon Museum of Modern Art, Karuizawa, Japan.

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