

eric firestone gallery

Helen Oji (b. 1950, Sacramento, CA) is a visual artist whose practice blends European, American, and Asian Art Historical references. It is a fusion of influences that affects her daily and imagined experiences, along with her interest in shape, abstraction, color, calligraphy, music, dance, poetry, and the unconscious. Throughout her career, Oji's work has evolved to include abstract, web-like sculptures, installations and set design, paintings depicting explosive phenomena and quotidian scenes, and meditations on her Japanese heritage. *The Point of Departure Series* (1973–74) is an exploration of Oji's heritage and is inspired by ukiyo-e prints, Japanese fairy tales, the Asian zodiac, and self-portraiture.

In 1976 Oji earned an MFA in Painting from California State University, Sacramento, and soon after moved to New York where she still resides. Upon arriving in New York, Oji integrated into the New York art scene and became an active member of the pan-Asian alternative art space known as Basement Workshop. In her early New York years, her work was exhibited in a two-person show at the Soho Center for the Visual Arts (1978), followed by two solo exhibitions at Monique Knowlton Gallery (1980–81), and group shows at Kenkeleba House and the New Museum of Contemporary art (1983).

In 1990, Oji became a founding member of the Godzilla Asian American Artists Network, a collective born out of New York City's Chinatown and a successor of Basement Workshop. They openly criticized the Whitney Museum for its dismissal of Asian American artists in 1991 and produced exhibitions and artistic collaborations to address political and social issues, such as the racially motivated 1982 murder of Vincent Chin.

Oji has exhibited her paintings, works on paper, and prints in numerous exhibitions in New York as well as across the United States and Europe. In addition to her artwork, she collaborated with an array of performers and writers in creating set designs presented in New York and London. Oji's work can be found in the public collections of museums across the country, including the Museum of Modern Art and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, NY; the Jacksonville Art Museum, FL; the Museum of South Texas, Corpus Christi; the Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers State University, NJ; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; the Philadelphia Art Museum; and the Minneapolis Institute of Art, among others.

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