



Ryuji Moriyama

Portfolio / Selected Works

For many years, I have observed how the center of my works emerges and continues to move.

This does not arise from theory, but from a feeling that appears naturally through the act of painting.

As I move back and forth between the act of painting and the judgments made while looking at the work, a hidden structure gradually reveals itself.

I call this earliest layer — before the center comes into being — **Before-Origin.**

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Works

These explanations were not conceived in advance.
They are words that emerged only when the structure
of each work revealed itself to me.



1987 Broken Book 75cm x 135.7cm Acrylic on paper, collage on paper

(Erosion)

"Around 1982, influenced by Matisse, I began creating works by coloring paper with acrylics and then pasting it. This was an attempt to relate the screen with vivid colors. Coloring and pasting paper was helpful for the precise verification of colors. This work was created about five years after I started working with paper. Here too, the central square, while being eroded, remains the key element.



1991 Teien (Garden) 63cm×48cm Acrylic on paper, collage on paper

(Question and Answer)

The red square, which is the center, attracts the eye with color and is attached to the lower ultramarine square in a step-like manner. It is a part of the element that creates imbalance while being the center. It involves and influences the surroundings and demands recovery. The center of this work has multiple roles: it is a chromatic focus, constructs the color relationship with the surroundings, and harmonizes balance and imbalance. Through these interactions, it contributes to the resolution of the entire screen. In short, this red square plays the role of both raising a question and giving an answer.



1992 Ishi no Ue (on the rock) 63cm×46cm Acrylic on paper, collage on paper

(Multicentric)

This work, an early exploration of 'the center,' is composed of variations of squares with 'two centers' as its theme. It attempts to achieve an expression where accidentally created color tones and brushwork coexist with sharp edges cut by scissors or cutters. I focused on a frontality that powerfully confronts the viewer with its weighty colors and forms. Here, the two centers influence each other, guiding the viewer's gaze and creating a complex composition and stability on the canvas. This piece represents a multi-faceted inquiry into the universal 'center.'



1994 Mirror 75cmx56cm acrylic on paper board
(Private Collection)

(Window)

This work is made up of the encounter between the uniformly painted yellow screen and the square paper that shows accidentalness. The color surface changes from black to reddish brown and yellow, leaving a bright margin, so it feels like it has depth. The pasted square paper creates movement in contrast to the flat screen and brings depth and change to the screen. Therefore, this square paper is not only a piece of paper pasted on the yellow screen but also plays the role of a window with depth. In this way, the central square is an important place where various elements of painting meet, such as intention and chance, flatness and depth, uniformity and diversity.



1996 Green and Blue 204cm×116cm Acrylic on canvas

(Space)

This is a work that challenged the question of whether what was possible with paper in the two-square series could be done with paint and canvas. There is a floating square that maintains frontality and an upper band that is placed so that the screen is nailed to the canvas. The central square is not just a form but plays an important role in symbolizing the spatiality and visual exploration of the screen.



2003 yb 156cm×91cm Acrylic on canvas panel

(Change)

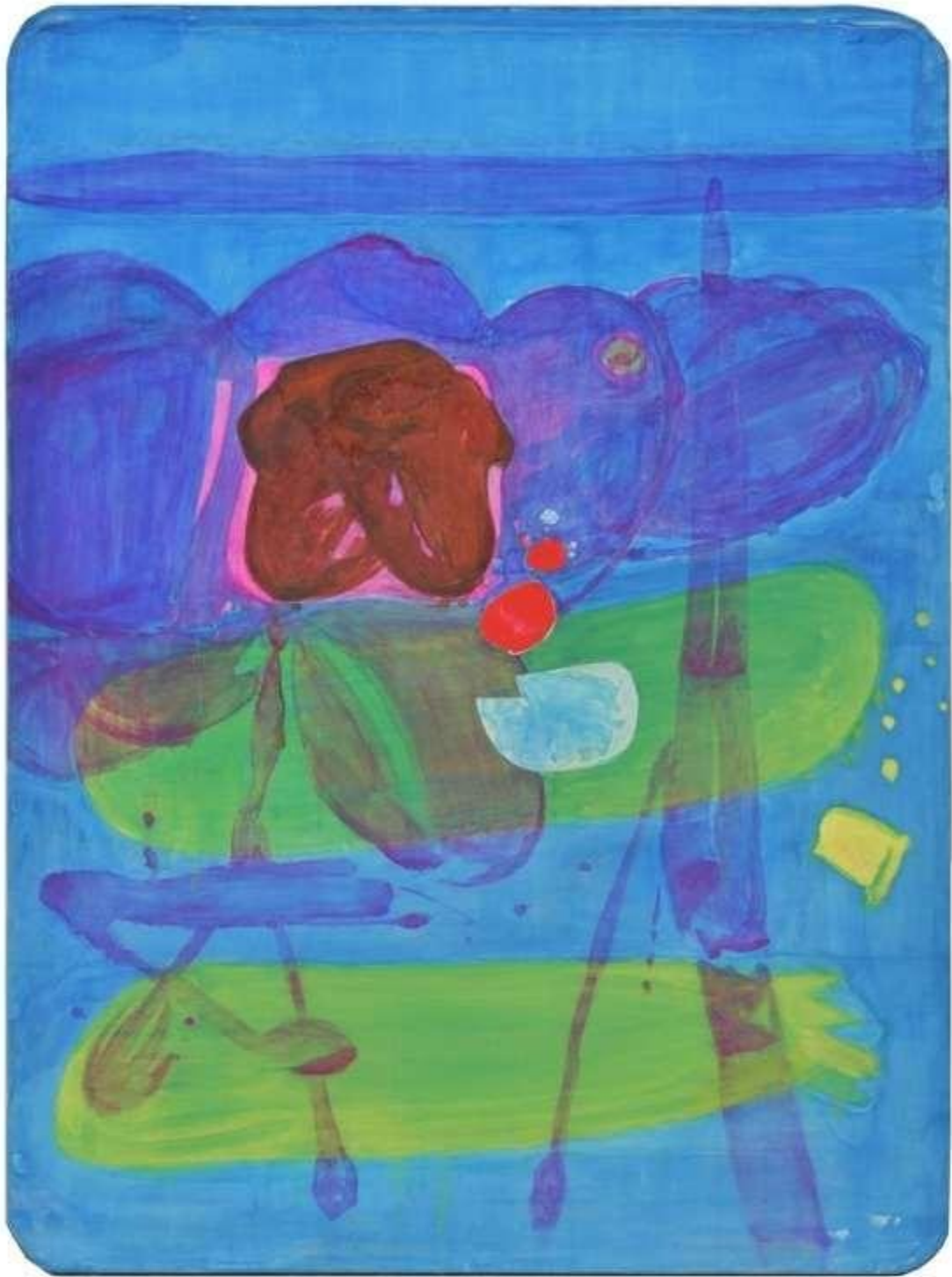
This is a variation of the two squares. The black at the bottom is devised to avoid being simple but monotonous. I tried to prevent the relationship with the surroundings from becoming monotonous and rigid, with the orange square as the center among the few and limited elements. In the process, the black convex shape at the bottom was born. In this way, the orange square is a center with multiple roles: visual center (most eye-catching), compositional center (determining the composition of the entire screen and creating relationships with the surroundings), and center of change (element that gives change and movement to the screen).



2018 Hanakana 165.5cmx125.5cm Acrylic on canvas

(Organic)

The entire screen is covered in pink. The color center is pink. The compositional center is the square brown. Organic red surrounds it. Here, the colors are designed to move towards the center in stages of brightness: pink, red, and brown, and to spread out on the screen in the reverse stages. This organic shape is an attempt to pursue expression based on a form that suggests breathing that was born from a small work.



2018 Mikana Hakana 173.5x130.5cm Acrylic on canvas

(Complexity)

From the lines that appeared automatically, the shape fleshed out from it. Against the overall blue, the center has pink and brown playing the role of color while being influenced by the surrounding shapes. The dark blue band at the top is an element that emphasizes the screen itself, matching the previous screen. The yellow-green echoes the violet blue. Here, compared to previous works, the center has a more flexible concept with a strange brown shape blocking the pink window, bringing complexity to the screen and playing an important role in enabling richer expression. It is both the compositional center and the color center. Or is blue the color center?



2023 Yume no Shikisaihen (Fragments of Dream Colors)
10cmx26.2cm Acrylic on canvas (Sold, Private Collection)

(Diffusion)

The soaked colors and the central brown square give stability to the screen as a weight.

The small blue, green, yellow. The small color fragments of red, pink of lingering color, on the other hand, create a complex arc as the center of color. It contributes to the

richness and complexity of the color in this work. Challenging the coexistence of movement and stability, rhythm and color. Here, the colors, which are color fragments,

can be said to be the center. In other words, an expanded interpretation of the meaning of

"center of color" is taking place. The sense of stability may be divided into the left center. Movement, rhythm, and color are assigned to the right center.



2024 Session No.4 73.5cmx51.7cm Acrylic on canvas

(Multicentric)

Here, the center is a fusion of a black circle and a square, and red, orange, and leaf green teardrop shapes gather or concentrate to surround it with a strength that rivals it. They incorporate a paper-cutting-like methodology. It can be said that they together form a composite center. The lines in the blue create variations of the color blue and surround the mass of color fragments as lines against the surface. The composite of the black shape and the colorful color fragments attracts the eye and is an important element that leads the composition and meaning of the entire screen.



Artist Statement

At first, I could not put into words that structure comes before
context.

Over many years of painting, I gradually came to understand
this.

That journey has become my creative path.

System and Work

The Current State and Its Origins

Until recently, I didn't understand what Postmodernism was and felt only confusion and anxiety about it. However, I've come to understand that it's about doubting the center and authority, and consequently, it led to the recognition of diversity and the declaration that grand narratives were over. Perhaps it began when Duchamp pointed to a propeller and said painting was dead. Or maybe when Pollock invented all-over painting.

Modernist painting became an object, like John McCracken's work, or something even further beyond that. The tendency to create works based on conceptual and contextual frameworks became stronger. I believe this has become a system where doubt is considered correct. The system I'm referring to is the situation surrounding the art world—the leading players, including museums, galleries, curators, and critics.

Postmodernism began as a reflection on Modernism and embraced various works with a stance of doubting authority. However, when that becomes a system, it leads to the exclusion of works that do not doubt, labeling them as old-fashioned.

Don't systems tend to protect themselves by discarding other possibilities?

My Stance

When I was a student, painting was already considered outdated. It was a time when I was asked, "Are you still painting?" For someone who came from the countryside, longing for Van Gogh, it was a completely confusing situation. However, modernist painting captivated and enchanted me. While I had an inner joy for painting that I could clearly feel, in the outside world, amid the dizzying trends of art, I desperately searched for a way to establish my own expression. I thought that if I piled up one work after another that felt just right, a light might appear. I approached my work with

a mind to just focus on the current piece. At that time, I realized that by looking at the relationship between the central object and its surroundings, or the relationship between the central object and different elements, or the relationship with the whole, the work becomes easier to read. This was at a time when all-over painting was already considered classical. However, no matter how much the times dictated or how popular something was, I could not create something that didn't feel right to me. I had no choice but to pursue the center with a clinging desperation.

At first, my engagement with the center was like groping in the fog, or doubting if it was the right path. But as I slowly continued, it gradually turned into a conviction within me. By placing a center, my work might be compositionally restricted, but I thought it would make other areas more free. It's like how a kite can fly higher with a string. And I thought I could incorporate various artistic achievements. This is not a simple citation, but about using the center as a filter to incorporate various achievements. I was clear that this was different from a simple citation. If I only borrowed surface forms, it would be easy to explain, but I believe there would be no depth. My citations incorporate various achievements not to show them off, but to make the work deeper and richer. This is related to a qualitative problem that is difficult to put into words.

The System That Discarded the Center

Currently, Postmodernism has become the system of the art world. In other words, the pursuit of the center has become completely unacceptable. While they claim to embrace everything with diversity, perhaps accepting the center is the one thing they cannot accept. This is likely because they feel a sense of authority centered on the purity and universality that Modernism pursued. But now, Postmodernism itself has become the authority, and it's not allowed to question it. To doubt doubt might be to believe. I believe in the center not for a fixed authority, but because it is visually very convenient for interpreting the creativity that anyone can possess. I think I'm not rejecting Postmodernism, which is uncomfortable for me, but rather incorporating it in

a sense of diversity. In other words, I intend to take a stance of neither denying nor affirming it. However, history proves that the same system doesn't last forever.

Is art just about words?

The integration of essence and concept.

Essence, indeed, exists. When you see a painting and feel an indescribable emotion, that is the essence. The words that describe it, those are the concepts.

Once, in a department store, I was moved by a painting so far away that I couldn't make out what was in it or who the artist was. When I rushed closer, I saw it was a Picasso poster. The emotion I felt was the essence, and the fact that it was a Picasso painting was the concept.

In other words, the essence exists before the concept.

The center is structure and will.

I have said that essence precedes concept. This means that emotion comes first, and words are used to explain it. So, when I consider what the source of emotion is, I believe it is the painting's color and form arrangement—in other words, its structure. This is not about context or social issues. Up to this point, I am the same as Formalism. However, I have introduced the concept of the center.

Why did I introduce the center? One reason is an inner necessity; the dissonance between the era and myself created a conflict, and I made the center the foundation of my work in my attempt to paint a good picture. I also thought that the center could serve as a filter to incorporate various art-historical achievements. And the most important reason is that I have always felt a sense of discomfort with the current situation where context takes precedence over emotion (essence).

The source of emotion is not in the context but in the structure. The center is a visualization of that. Why can I say that? The center attracts the eye and creates a hierarchy and structure on the canvas. Intentionally placing the center is an expression of my will to create a structure.

To me, the center is both a structure and a will.

By placing the center, I am expressing my will in relation to the mainstream of art history, Formalism and Postmodernism.

A Declaration of Post-Postmodernism

Modernism sought the autonomy of painting, but closed itself within.

Postmodernism searched for justification outside the work, and in doing so, forgot emotion.

I aim to preserve the autonomy of painting while fusing it with intention.

Through the device of the center, I bind the structure of the work with my will, connecting the inside and the outside.

This is my Declaration of Post-Postmodernism.

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As a result of Formalism's pure pursuit of the essence within a work, it was able to explore but lost its ability to unfold. By purely pursuing what color, form, and the elements of painting are, narratives and human feelings other than structure were considered extraneous. Even when McCracken spoke of a myth, it emerged from the structure itself, and he did not bring in the words or images of a myth from the outside. However, because it pursued to the point where it could no longer unfold, Postmodernism was forced to seek the basis for a work in external "context," rather than developing from within the structure. I believe, however, that the power of words has become too dominant.

As a person who came from the countryside, longing to be like Van Gogh, I felt a sense of conflict with this era. Why did words take precedence over emotion? If I were to put what I was trying to do into words, I was attempting to defy the times and reconstruct the essence: the structure.

This is where I introduced the concept of "the center." To me, the center is both a structure and a device for expressing my will.

By intentionally introducing the center into my work, I have fused my will with the work through a structural center, not through words.

My works are self-sufficient, supported by their internal structure, and do not need to be propped up by words or context like Duchamp's "Fountain."

Even if words take precedence over the work in Postmodernism, my words never take precedence over my work.

2025 Ryuji Moriyama

Post-Postmodernism Declaration: Critical Examination and Response (Q&A)

Q1. Is this not merely a return to Modernism?

A. Rather than pursuing artistic purification or self-expression within the context of art history, I have explored structures in which the 'center' of the work emerges for the sake of 'resolving emotion' and 'restoring breath.' Consequently, my practice stands at a point distinct from Modernism, Expressionism, and Postmodernism.

Q 2 . What do you mean by "center"?

A. The 'center' I refer to is not a fixed, singular point; it is a generative field in which one or multiple centers emerge according to the necessity of the work.

Q3. Are emotion, essence, and will too ambiguous? What is the mechanism for them to become a universal structure?

A. Will becomes a part of the work through the context of intentionally placing the center. However, the center itself is supported by an objective structure, meaning visual laws. Even if emotion itself differs from person to person, the structure supporting it is based on visual laws common to everyone.

This is how the phrase 'The Center is Structure and Will' came to be.

Q4. Since Postmodernism is a universally accepted global consciousness, is the Declaration itself not impossible?

A. I understand the argument that if everything is relative, universal truth cannot be established. However, I create not based on the accuracy of an external theory, but on the inner truth that emotion precedes language.

This Declaration is a response to the personal struggle I faced in the age of Postmodernism. The work is a form of self-healing, but it is bound to the structure by the device of the center and is opened to the world.

This Declaration is a deeply felt necessity to protect both my past and future works.

Career

Education

- **1980** Graduated from Sokei Art School (Awarded First Prize / Solo Exhibition Grant)
- **1981** Completed Postgraduate Studies at Sokei Art School

Selected Solo Exhibitions

- **2024** Cloud9 Gallery (Tokyo)
- **2019** Gallery The Earth (Kamakura)
- **2015** Gallery Fukuyama (Tokyo)
- **2013** Gallery Fukuyama (Tokyo)
- **2000 Shimane Museum of Art Gallery (Shimane)**
- **1991** Nabis Gallery (Tokyo)
- **1981** Miyuki Gallery (Tokyo)

Selected Group Exhibitions & Art Fairs

- **2024** Tokyo International Art Fair (Tokyo)
- **2016** Art Expo New York (New York)
- **2014** ISE New York Art Search Exhibition (New York)
- **2012** "13 Expressions of Contemporary Abstraction"

Awards & Grants

- **2020** Selected for FACE 2020 (Sompo Museum of Art)
- **2019** Selected for FACE 2019 (Sompo Museum of Art)
- **2009** Selected for Haruhi Painting Triennale
- **2000** Selected for the 1st Yamamoto Kanae Print Grand Prize Exhibition
- **1996** Recipient of the Holbein Scholarship



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