



Ryuji Moriyama

Portfolio / Selected Works

I do not paint from external narratives, nor from a sterile, inorganic purity. My work takes place within the very fluctuation where form begins to emerge.

I call this yet-undetermined, trembling state the **Zensō (Pre-layer)**— a realm in which visual laws quietly begin their first movements.

Conversely, I refer to the **Kōsō (Post-layer)** as the state in which the fluctuation finally settles, and the visual forces converge into a single, stabilized point.

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Works

These explanations were not conceived in advance. They are words that emerged only when the visual laws and the subtle fluctuations within each work revealed themselves.



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

(Erosion)

Around 1982, influenced by Matisse, I began creating works by painting acrylic on paper and attaching those pieces to the surface. This was an attempt to relate the entire picture through vivid color, and the process of coloring and pasting paper became a rigorous way to examine color itself. This work was made about five years after I began working with paper.

Here too, the central square—though being eroded—remains the key element. The center is just beginning to emerge within the fluctuation of the Zensō (Pre-layer)..

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

(Question and Answer)

The red square at the center draws the eye through its color and connects to the ultramarine square below in a stepped formation. Although it is the center, it also becomes part of the imbalance within the composition. It pulls the surrounding elements toward itself, influences them, and demands their return.

The center in this work functions simultaneously as a chromatic focal point, a generator of color relationships with the surrounding forms, and a mediator between balance and imbalance. Through these interactions, it contributes to the resolution of the entire picture. In other words, this red square poses a question while at the same time offering an answer.

Within the fluctuation of Zensō (Pre-layer), the center is beginning to emerge— and as it does, it casts its questions while also providing their answers within the painting.



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

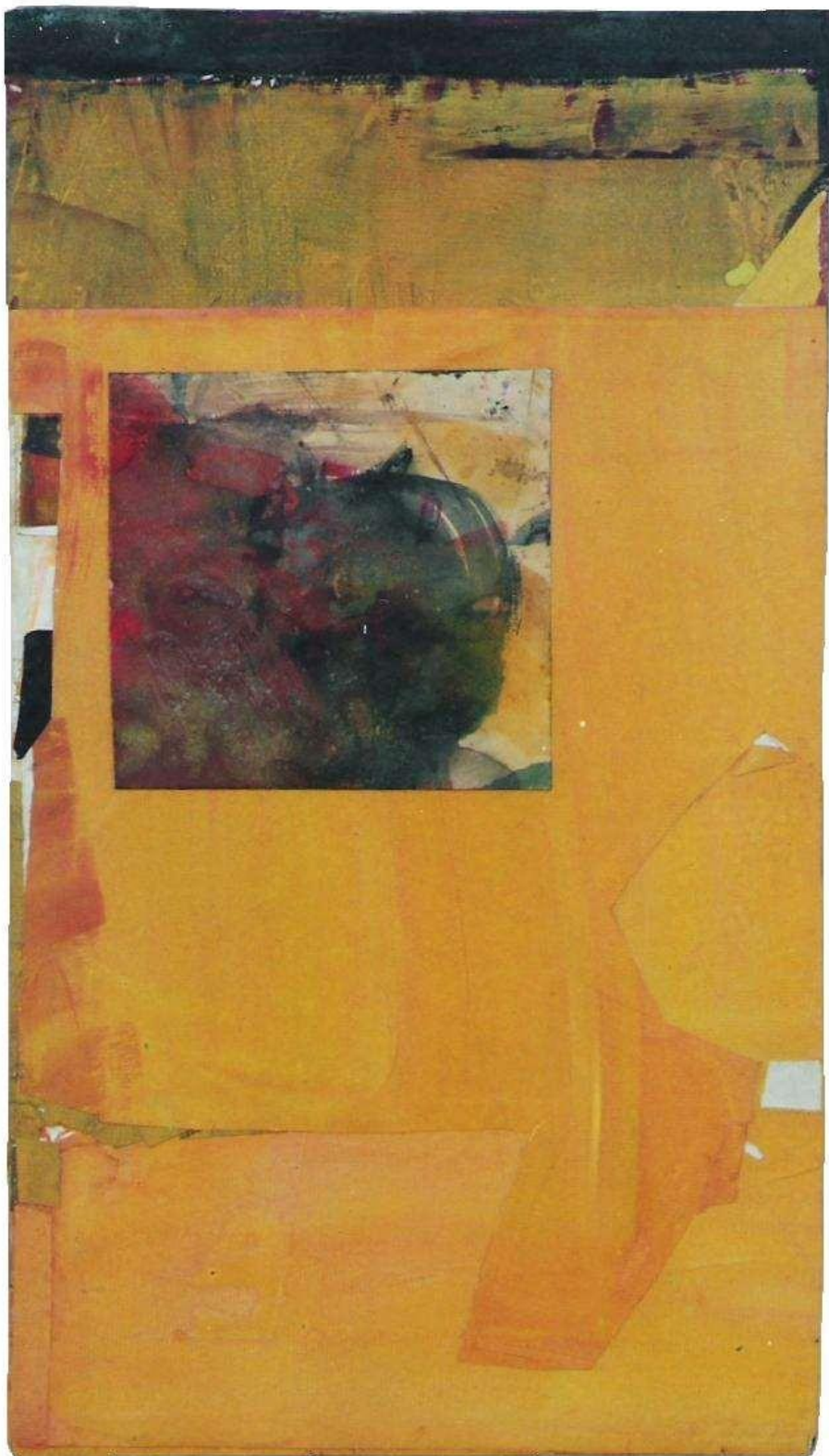
(Multicentric)

1992 On the rock

This early attempt in my exploration of the “center” is a work structured around the theme of *two centers*, composed through variations of squares. It brings together the accidental tones of color and brushwork with the sharp edges cut by scissors and a knife, attempting a coexistence of these contrasting qualities.

With its heavy colors and forms, the work confronts the viewer frontally, and the two centers influence one another, guiding the gaze and generating both complexity and stability within the composition. It is a piece that demonstrates a multifaceted inquiry into the universal idea of the “center.”

Here, multiple centers begin to emerge simultaneously within the fluctuation of Zensō (Pre-layer), interfering with one another and creating the directional structure of the work.



1994 Mirror 75cmx56cm acrylic on paper board

(Private Collection)

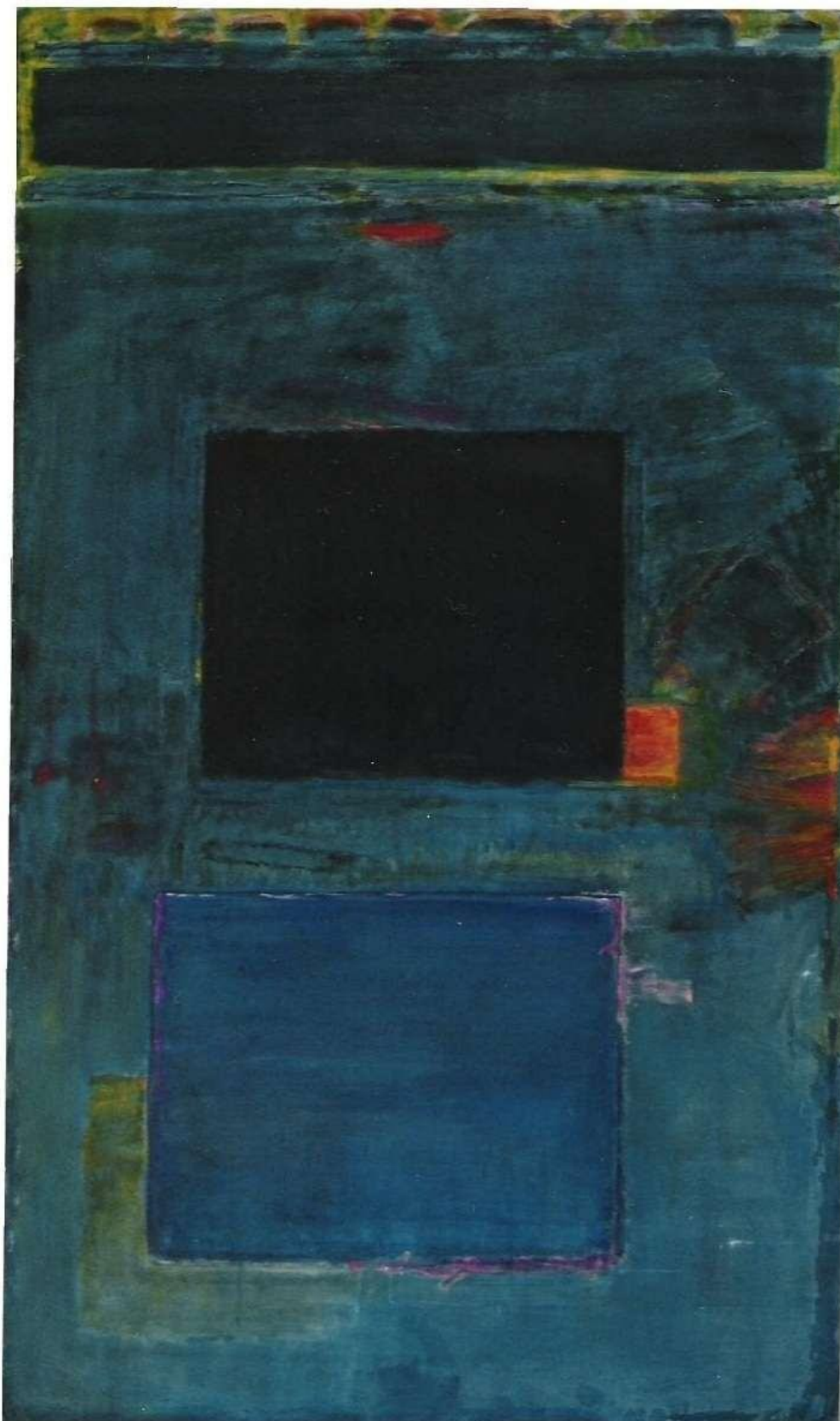
(Window)

1994 Mirror

This work is formed through the encounter between a uniformly painted yellow surface and a square piece of paper marked by chance. The color field shifts from black to reddish brown to yellow, leaving bright areas of untouched space that create a sense of depth within the surface itself. The attached square of paper, in contrast to the flat yellow ground, introduces movement and brings depth and variation to the composition. Thus, the square functions both as a single piece of paper placed on the surface and as a kind of “window” that opens onto an interior space.

In this way, the central square becomes a crucial site where intention and accident, flatness and depth, uniformity and diversity all meet.

Here, within the fluctuation of Zensō (Pre-layer), the center begins to emerge, quietly indicating depth and the structural direction of the painting as a “window.”



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

(Space)

This work is part of the “two squares” series, created from the desire to see whether what had been achieved with painted paper could be realized instead with paint and canvas.

While maintaining a frontal presence, a floating square appears alongside an upper band placed as if to pin the surface to the canvas.

The central square is not merely a shape; it plays an essential role in symbolizing the spatiality of the picture and the act of visual inquiry itself.

Here, within the fluctuation of Zensō (Pre-layer), the center begins to emerge and starts to function as the axis that supports the space of the painting.



2003 yb 156cm×91cm Acrylic on canvas panel

(Change)

yb 2003

This work is a variation on the “two squares” series. The black form at the bottom is simple, yet devised so that it does not become monotonous. Within the limited number of elements, I worked to ensure that the relationships surrounding the orange square—the center—would not become rigid or repetitive. Through this process, the black protruding shape below emerged naturally.

The orange square serves multiple roles: it is the **visual center** (the most eye-catching element), the **structural center** (determining the composition and forming relationships with the surrounding forms), and the **center of change** (introducing movement and variation into the painting).

Here, within the fluctuation of Zensō (Pre-layer), the center begins to emerge, and as it does, it starts to move the entire structure of the painting by carrying these multiple roles.



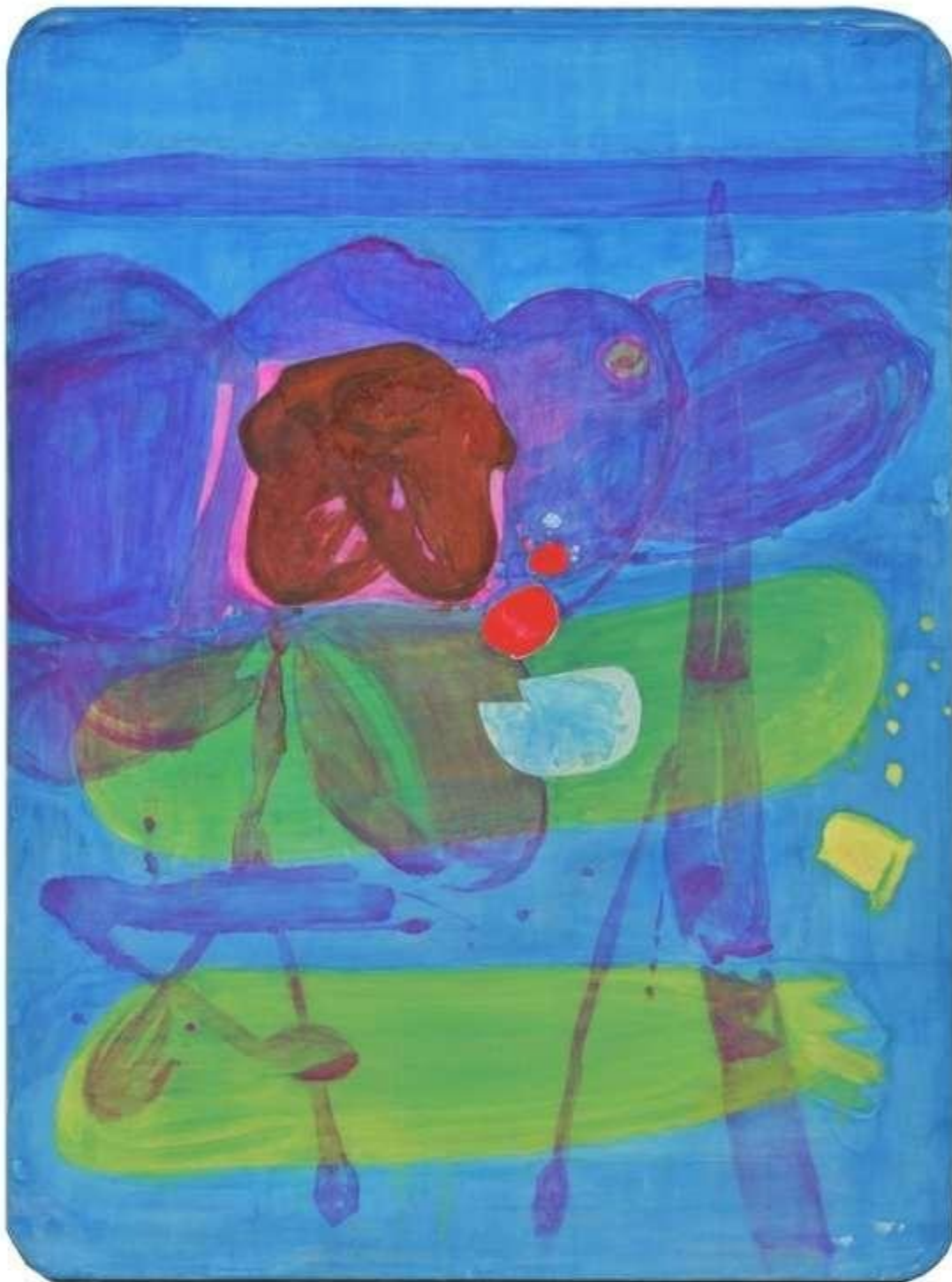
2018 Hanakana 165.5cmx125.5cm Acrylic on canvas

(Organic)

2018 Hanakana

The entire surface is covered in pink, which serves as the chromatic center of the work. The compositional center is a brown square, surrounded by organic red forms. Here, the pink, red, and brown are arranged so that their gradations of brightness move toward the center and, in reverse, expand outward across the surface. The organic shapes were inspired by small earlier works—forms that emerged by chance yet seemed to breathe—and I sought to pursue that quality on a larger scale.

Here, within the fluctuation of Zensō (Pre-layer), the center begins to emerge, and as it does, it connects with the organic forms, guiding the breathing and structure of the entire painting.



2018 Mikana Hakana 173.5x130.5cm Acrylic on canvas

(Complexity)

2019 Mikana–Hakana

From the automatic lines that first appeared, a blue form was built up across the surface. Against this blue field, the center is formed by pink and brown shapes that function chromatically while also being influenced by the surrounding forms. The dark blue band at the top echoes earlier works and serves to emphasize the picture plane itself. The yellow-green interacts with the violet-blue, creating a rhythmic interplay of color.

Compared with earlier works, the center here has become more complex: a pink “window” partially obstructed by an oddly shaped brown form. This flexible interpretation of the center introduces complexity into the composition and enables a richer form of expression. It is both the compositional center and the chromatic center— or perhaps the blue itself could be considered the chromatic center.

Here, within the fluctuation of Zensō (Pre-layer), multiple centers begin to emerge simultaneously, interfering with one another and generating the complex structure of the entire painting.



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

(Diffusion)

2023 Yume no Shikisaihen

The absorbed colors and the brown square at the center act as a weight, giving stability to the surface. Small fragments of blue, green, yellow, red, and a lingering pink form an arc that functions as another chromatic center, contributing to the richness and complexity of the color in this work. It attempts to balance movement and stability, rhythm and color. Here, the color fragments themselves can be seen as a kind of center—an expanded interpretation of what a “color center” can mean. The left center may be providing stability, while the right center carries movement, rhythm, and color.

Here, within the fluctuation of Zensō (Pre-layer), multiple centers begin to emerge, and as the color fragments disperse, they respond to one another and quietly guide the structure of the entire painting.



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

(Multicentric)

2024 Session No.4

The center in this work is formed by a fusion of a black circle and a black square, around which red, orange, and leaf-green droplet shapes gather or encircle with equal intensity. These elements incorporate a cut-paper methodology, and together they form a composite center. The lines within the blue area create variations of blue and act as linear elements that surround the cluster of color fragments. The black form and the colorful fragments together attract the viewer's gaze and become a crucial force that drives both the structure and the meaning of the entire composition.

Here, within the fluctuation of Zensō (Pre-layer), multiple centers begin to emerge simultaneously, and by resisting and counterbalancing one another, they establish the multi-centered structure of the painting.



Artist Statement

At first, I could not grasp in words the idea that structure precedes context. But over many years of painting, through the slow back and forth of action and judgment, the fluctuation of Zensō (Pre-layer) and the convergence of Kōsō (Post-layer) gradually connected within me, and their meaning slowly came into view. That process of understanding is, in itself, the path of my artistic practice.

System and Work

Current Situation and Background

Until recently, I could not clearly understand what postmodernism was; I felt only confusion and a sense of unease. Gradually, I came to realize that it was about questioning the center, questioning authority, and from that stance, accepting diversity and declaring the end of grand narratives. Perhaps this began when Duchamp pointed to a propeller and suggested that painting had ended, or when Pollock invented all-over painting.

Modernist painting eventually became object-like, as in the work of John McCracken, and then moved even further toward “things.” At the same time, conceptual tendencies grew stronger, and artworks increasingly relied on context for their meaning. This, I believe, became a system in which *doubt itself* was considered correct. By “system,” I mean the conditions that surround and lead the art world— museums, galleries, curators, critics, and so on.

Postmodernism began as a critique of modernism, embracing a stance of questioning authority and accepting a wide range of works. But once that stance becomes a system, it leads to the exclusion of works that *do not* question— as if such works were outdated. A system tends to protect itself, and in doing so, it may cut off other possibilities.

My Position

When I was a student, painting was already considered outdated. People would ask, “Are you still painting?” For someone who had come from the countryside admiring Van Gogh, it was a deeply confusing time. Yet modernist painting captivated me completely. Inside, I felt a clear joy in painting, while outside, the art world was rapidly shifting in bewildering directions. I kept searching for a way to reconcile

myself with these currents and still establish my own expression. I believed that if I continued to accumulate works—one by one, each one made with conviction—some light would eventually appear. So I focused on the single painting in front of me.

At that time, I realized that by looking at the relationship between what becomes the center and its surroundings— between the center and the elements that differ from it, or between the center and the whole— the work became easier to read. This was at a moment when all-over painting was already considered classical. But no matter how the times changed or what was fashionable, I could not make something that did not feel right to me. All I could do was pursue the center with a kind of desperate resolve.

In the beginning, I approached the center as if feeling my way through fog, uncertain whether this was the right direction. But through the slow repetition of painting and judging, my relationship with the center gradually turned into conviction.

Placing a center creates compositional constraints, yet I came to feel that it actually frees the rest of the painting— just as a kite can fly high because it is held by a string, the center becomes the point that supports the entire surface.

The center is generated within the fluctuation of Zensō (Pre-layer) and converges in Kōsō (Post-layer). I have used this center as a filter through which to absorb various achievements of art. This is not superficial quotation, but a necessary incorporation that deepens and enriches the work. If one borrows only the form, the explanation is easy, but no depth is born. My references serve to strengthen the internal structure of the work and to make it deeper and richer. They concern a qualitative dimension that is difficult to put into words.

A System That Has Abandoned the Center

Today, postmodernism has become the governing system of the art world. In this context, the pursuit of a center has become almost entirely unacceptable. Although postmodernism speaks of diversity and the acceptance of many forms, it seems unable

to accept the idea of a center. Perhaps this is because the center evokes the purity and universality sought by modernism, and thus appears to carry an aura of authority.

Yet now it is postmodernism itself that has become the authority, and questioning it is no longer permitted. To doubt doubt itself may be another way of saying to believe. My belief in the center is not for the sake of a fixed authority, but because it is visually useful in interpreting the creativity that anyone can possess.

I do not reject postmodernism simply because it feels uncomfortable to me; in a sense, I incorporate it as one form of diversity. I choose to remain in a position that neither affirms nor denies it. But history shows that no system continues forever.

Is art just about words?

The essence and the concept must be understood together.

Essence truly exists. When you look at a painting and feel a wordless sense of emotion, that is the essence. The words used to explain that feeling are the concept.

Once, in a department store, I was moved by a painting far in the distance— I could not see what was depicted, nor did I know who the artist was. When I hurried closer, I discovered it was a poster of Picasso. The emotion I felt was the essence; the fact that it was a Picasso was the concept.

In other words, essence exists prior to concept.

The center is structure and will.

I have said that essence precedes concept. This means that emotion comes first, and words merely explain it afterward. When I asked myself what produces that emotion, I came to believe that it arises from the structure of the painting— from the arrangement of color and form. It is not created by context or social issues. Up to this point, I am aligned with formalism. But I introduced the idea of the center.

Why did I bring in the center? One reason is inner necessity: the conflict between myself and the times pushed me to seek a way to paint better, and the center became the anchor of the picture. Through the center, I felt I could filter and absorb various achievements of art history. Most importantly, I had long felt discomfort with the current situation in which context is prioritized over emotion—over essence.

The cause of emotion lies not in context but in structure. The center is what makes that structure visible. Why can I say this? Because the center draws the eye, creates hierarchy, and brings the structure into being. In Zensō (Pre-layer) it continues to waver, and in Kōsō (Post-layer) it becomes fixed as the point where visual laws converge. To place a center intentionally is to express the will to create structure.

For me, the center is both the site of generation (structure) and an expression of will. That will represents my own position— one that cannot be absorbed into the frameworks of either formalism or 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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Supplement

The center is generated within the fluctuation of Zensō (Pre-layer) and becomes quietly fixed in Kōsō (Post-layer) as the point where visual laws converge. Through this process, structure becomes the source of emotion—working before words can.

Formalism, in pursuing the essence within the work to its purest limits, reached a point where inquiry was possible but further development became difficult. By relentlessly examining what color, form, and the elements of painting are, it came to regard narratives or human emotions—anything beyond structure—as unnecessary.

Even when a mythic atmosphere appears in McCracken's work, it arises from the structure itself, not from importing mythic words or images from outside. Yet because formalism pushed its inquiry to the point where no further expansion was possible, postmodernism had little choice but to ground artworks not in internal structure but in context—an external framework.

Today, however, I feel that the power of language has become far too dominant. I struggled with this dissonance between myself and the times. Why should words take precedence over emotion? In essence, what I sought to do was to reconstruct structure—the true source of essence—even if that meant going against the prevailing tendencies of the era.

This is why I introduced the concept of the center. For me, the center is both structure and a device for expressing intention. By placing the center deliberately within the work, I fused my intention with the structure itself, rather than with language.

My works stand on their own through their internal structure; they do not require the support of words or context, as Duchamp's *Fountain* does. Even if postmodernism places language above the artwork, my words do not take precedence over my work.

Ryuji Moriyama, September 2025

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

Q1. Is this not merely a return to Modernism?

A. I have pursued a structure in which the center emerges— not for the sake of purification or self-expression in art history, but for the resolution of emotion and the restoration of breath. For this reason, my practice stands apart from modernism, expressionism, and postmodernism alike.

Modernism purified form, but it lacked a perspective on Zensō (Pre-layer)— the generative stage in which visual laws come into being. What I work with is precisely this missing “layer of generation,” and it is not a return to the past.

Q 2 . What do you mean by “center”?

A. The center is not a predetermined point. It arises within the fluctuation of Zensō (Pre-layer) and converges in Kōsō (Post-layer) as a generative field. It may appear as one or as several, emerging as the place where the structure of the painting and the painter’s intention intersect.

Q3. What is your position?

A. My position belongs neither to modernism nor to postmodernism. Modernism sought purity of form, while postmodernism questioned the very existence of a center. What I engage with is neither of these, but the **process through which structure is generated.**

I stand on a structure that arises as the center and its surroundings influence one another. This is not an extension of past theories, but an independent dynamic of its own

Q4. Are emotion, essence, and will too ambiguous? What is the mechanism for them to become a universal structure?

A. Intention becomes part of the work through the deliberate act of placing a center. Yet the center that is placed is supported by objective structure—the visual laws of gravity, direction, and focus. Although the experience of emotion differs from person to person, the visual laws that sustain it are universal.

It is from this relationship that the phrase “**the center is both structure and will**” was born.

Q5. Since Postmodernism is a universally accepted global consciousness, is the Declaration itself not impossible?

A. I understand the view that if everything is relative, then no universal truth can exist. But my work is not grounded in the accuracy of external theories; it is grounded in an inner truth—that emotion precedes language. This declaration is my response to the conflict I carried throughout the postmodern era.

The work is a form of self-healing, yet through the device of the center, it is also bound to structure and opened to the world. This declaration is a necessary statement, meant to protect both my past works and the works I have yet to create.

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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