

What's In A Dot?

Repetitions, patterns, textures, obsessions – these are the many words to describe **Yayoi Kusama**'s artworks. Her works is as recognizable as a Warhol, all the dots and spots are highly distinctive. But, what is it all about?

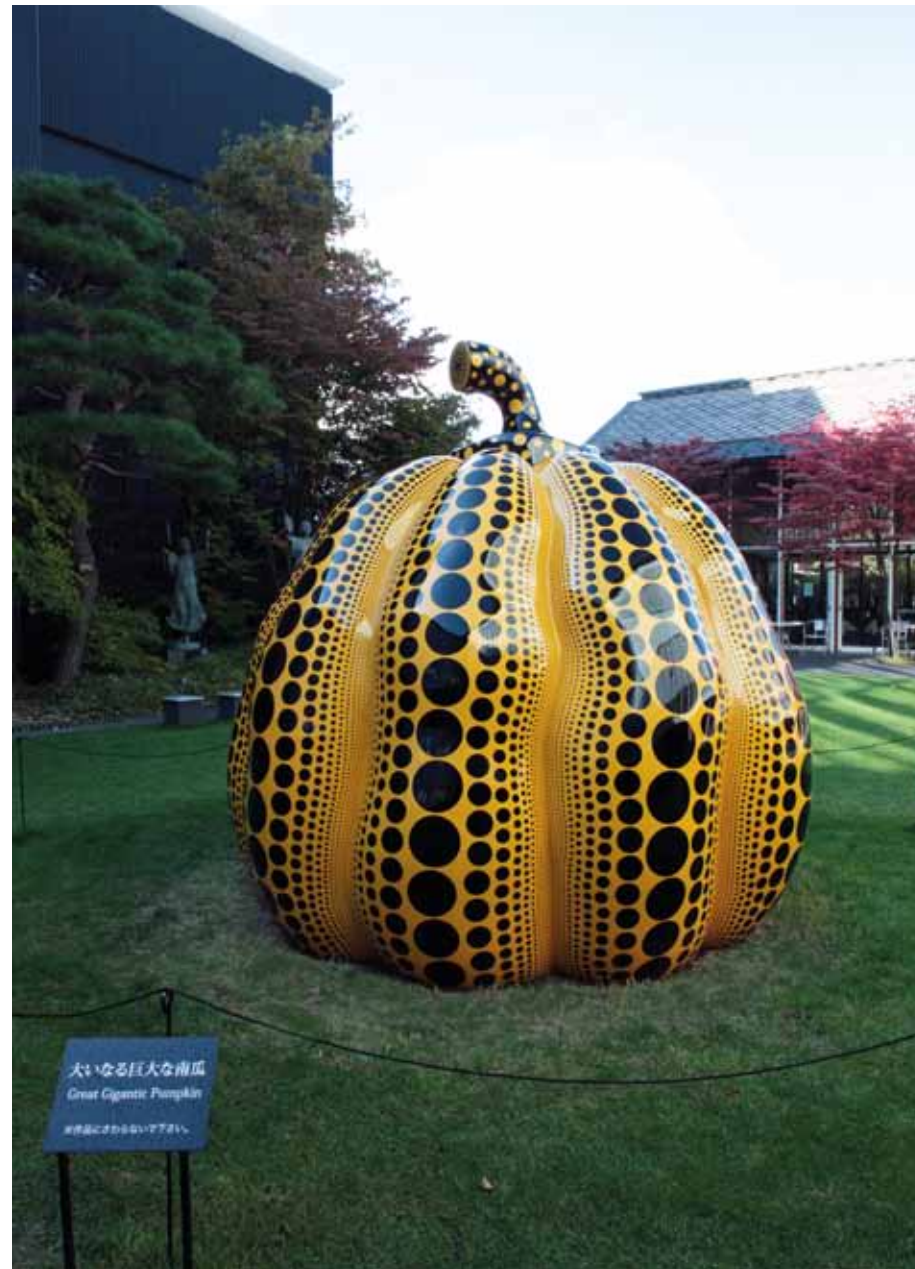
STORY BY Deborah Iskandar

Since her retrospective at the Tate Modern in London in 2012 Yayoi's artwork has exploded in the international art scene. We see it everywhere, in the galleries, and at Louis Vuitton shops worldwide...

But who is the woman behind the dots, and why does she do it? The origin of the dots dates back to when she was ten years old (she is currently in her eighties). She was looking at a red pattern tablecloth, and her eyes started rolling, and she saw red flower patterns everywhere, on the floor, ceiling, the window glass, and the posts. Yayoi had experienced her first hallucination, a sensory experience that does not exist outside the mind.

She paints all these patterns because that's her way of seeing the world. She suffers from an "obsessive disorder personality" which is anxiety disorder characterized by recurrent, unwanted thoughts (obsessions) and/or repetitive behaviors. Yayoi's art is a way of dealing with life, and keeps her whole, or "sane".

To the untrained eye, It all looks the same, and we feel it is everywhere, and not rare. But, if we examine her artwork closely, every



work is unique, a different pattern, texture, or net. One of her most well known series is the Infinity net paintings. If we look closely at the painting, we might realize that the dots and the nets are actually one infinite union. When the dots grow bigger and jostle at each other, they become a net, and the net, as it spreads wider and wider, becomes dots and circles.

Yayoi also says the polka dots resembles a sun. The sun is a symbol of energy and the source of life. The dot is also the form of a full moon, which is calm, round, senseless, and unknowing. Polka dots can't stay alone, like the communicative life of people.

Three and more polka dots become

movement. Our earth is only one polka dot among the million stars in the cosmos; Polka dots are a way to infinity. Polka dots can't stand-alone; it must be in a cluster. Like life, people can't exist alone, we have to communicate with each other, and we are all connected. That is Yayoi in a nutshell.

Yayoi is the ultimate artist, using patterns, shapes and textures to survive in life. She considers herself the modern day "Alice in Wonderland". Swimming through forms and dots, drowning in colors and shapes and breaking through the infinity nets that are designed to raise her to become one of the foremost modernist artists. ¹⁰



Deborah Iskandar

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During the last decade there has been a rapid and reassuring rise in the development of Asian art. The market has seen an increase of emerging Asian artist from China, Japan and South East Asian leaving a strong impression on the global art scene. From museum shows to auction houses, we see the world's increased emphasis on the importance of Asian art corresponding with the rise in value at international auctions and amongst private collectors.

Deborah Iskandar, a former managing director of both Sotheby and Christie in Indonesia, has often been asked how to best navigate the current evolving market trends of Asian art in particular. Armed with more than 20 years' experience collectively, within the art world, she is an art connoisseur. Through her advisory firm, ISA Art Advisory®, she aims to share her knowledge with collectors in need of her expertise.

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