

を宵の見た明日星  
Matsumoto Yoko:  
The Day I Saw the Evening Star  
松本陽子

## List of Works Commentaries

### About the exhibition's composition

The exhibition "Matsumoto Yoko: The Day I Saw the Evening Star" consists of 35 paintings, ranging from the early works in the late 1950s to the latest works from 2026, as well as 15 drawings.

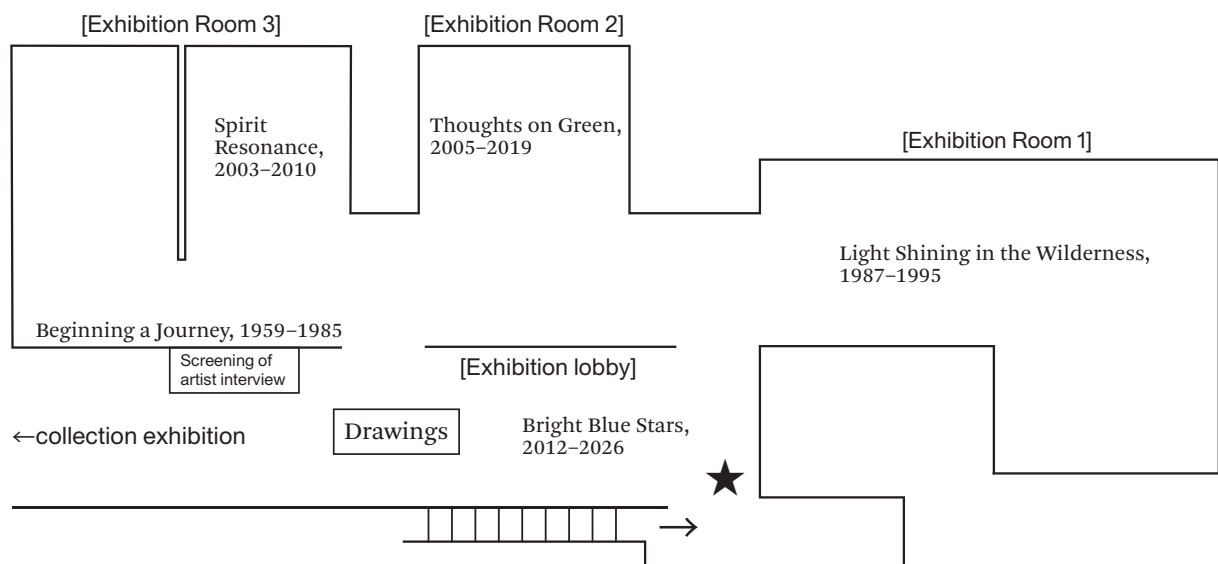
The works are classified into five chapters based on their forms and production dates.

Due to venue constraints, the chapters are not arranged chronologically. Please refer to the exhibition diagram below.

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Exhibition Robby : Bright Blue Stars, 2012–2026  
Exhibition Room 1 : Light Shining in the Wilderness, 1987–1995  
Exhibition Room 2 : Thoughts on Green, 2005–2019  
Exhibition Room 3 : Beginning a Journey, 1959 –1985  
Exhibition Room 3 : Spirit Resonance, 2003–2010  
Exhibition Robby : Drawings (sketchbooks), artist interview video screening

Works no.10, 20, 23, 27, 29, 43, 44, 45 are not exhibited at this venue.



[Exhibition lobby]

## Bright Blue Stars, 2012–2026

In the 2000s, having returned from acrylic to oil painting in full, while Matsumoto continued producing paintings based on green, in the meantime, from around 2012, she also began painting works based on white [no. 34]. This was a period during which the green paintings she had produced as if covering up the entire canvas in green began to evolve into the next phase. White, like black, is a color that has always supported Matsumoto's works. It is an indispensably important hue to her. Compared to the dark tint of green, a white picture, from which the color on the layer beneath oozes faintly out, brings out the best of the characteristic of oil paint, in which numerous layers of color can be overlapped to represent a profound space.

After experiencing a physical accident of being injured and hospitalized, in 2020, Matsumoto closed her studio in Sennin-cho, Hachioji-shi, Tokyo, which she had used for about thirty years, and decided to work at home in Koganei-shi, Tokyo. As her studio had become smaller, the size of works she could produce became smaller than before. She says she found it difficult not to be able to step back and look at her work from a distance.

In this new environment, from around 2021, Matsumoto felt that commonplace nature, particularly plants, which had always been a subject of observation, was conversely looking at her, and deepened her interest in botany all the more. At times, she says botanical images of grapes, bamboo shoots, or vines would surface from a work she had completed. The titles of her recent works including the words "botanical," and "nature," demonstrate her keen interest and thoughts on plants.

Even after she turned eighty, Matsumoto has never taken more than two years to present new works in Japan. From 2024 onward, she also had chances to present works in London and New York. At her solo show in London, for the first time, she presented a work based on blue [no. 37], a color which had gradually increased its presence in her green and white paintings. It was received favorably.

The artist, who is ninety this year, never stops painting. She continues working in front of her canvas in pursuit of a soft, extensive space. Many years of training, experience, and memories will keep being expressed in her paintings as they unfold new developments.

No.	Title	Date	Technique and materials	Dimensions	Collection
34	Vibrating Light	2012	Oil, charcoal and pastel on canvas	73.0 × 91.0	Hino Gallery
35	Garden of the Sky	2016	Oil, charcoal and pastel on canvas	130.5 × 194.0	Hino Gallery
36	A note on Nature II	2023	Oil, charcoal and pastel on canvas	130.5 × 194.0	Matsumoto Collection MUSEUM COLLECTION
37	The Day I Saw the Evening Star	2023	Oil, charcoal and pastel on canvas	130.0 × 162.0	
38	Private Botanical Dictionary	2024	Oil, charcoal and pastel on canvas	182.0 × 182.0	Private collection
39	Gazed at by Nature	2026	Oil, charcoal and pastel on canvas	181.2 × 227.5	Private collection

[Exhibition Room1]

## Light Shining in the Wilderness, 1987–1995

To Matsumoto, who wanted to create “airy paintings in transparent colors,”<sup>1</sup> the gloss and heftiness characteristic of oil paint stood in her way like a thick wall. Her encounter with acrylic paint at such a time pointed to a solution.

Acrylic paint is water-soluble and quick-drying. Its color comes out well, and once dry, creates a hard texture. Matsumoto devised a method in which she dissolved the acrylic in a large amount of water, applied it thinly, and frequently used gloss polymer medium to wipe it off. As raw cotton canvas, which allows the paint to sink in, was not sold in Japan, she searched for a similar fabric and primed it by herself.

There, pink became the key color. While Matsumoto says she chose it because it was “a frivolous color”<sup>2</sup> unsuitable for a substantial painting, once she had determined pink as her color, she never stopped pursuing it.

Matsumoto’s work proceeded roughly as follows. Using a thick brush, she would spread acrylic paint dissolved in water across a canvas laid on the floor to compose the outline of her image. Then, she would dribble gloss polymer medium onto it and wipe the paint off with a cloth. By mixing paint with medium or paint with paint, she created intricate colors and tones. As the mixing could not be done once the paint dried, each work

was completed in a day.

After a tense day of work, both Matsumoto’s body and mind were totally worn out by the evening. Affected significantly by external factors such as season, weather, wind direction, and humidity, it was not always that the artist was satisfied with the finished work. The words “wilderness” and “mountain” included in the titles of Matsumoto’s works are inspired by the Old Testament, which she liked reading in those days. One cannot help overlapping them with the lonely, severe process of her work.

Yet, by continuing to work, Matsumoto acquired skill and experience, which provided her with firm belief and excitement that they would lead her toward her ideal of painting. Her paintings attained a higher degree of perfection, and recognition of her work caught up. In 1991, Matsumoto held a solo exhibition at the National Museum of Art, Osaka, at which she presented twelve new works including one measuring 250 cm in length. During the 1990s, she held solo exhibitions almost every year and took part in many group exhibitions too. It was a fruitful decade for Matsumoto.

<sup>1</sup> “Color and the Body,” *Yoko Matsumoto*, 2007, 190.

<sup>2</sup> “Artist visit; Matsumoto Yoko” [in Japanese], *Bijutsu techo*, August 1985, 180.

No.	Title	Date	Technique and materials	Dimensions	Collection
9	The Wilderness of Beer-Sheba I	1987	Acrylic on canvas	227.0 × 182.0	The National Museum of Art, Osaka
11	Dark Rock	1990	Acrylic on canvas	200.0 × 250.0	Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo
12	The Wilderness of Beer-Sheba II	1990	Acrylic on canvas	200.0 × 250.0	Fukuyama Museum of Art
13	The Mountain of Ephraim II	1990	Acrylic on canvas	200.0 × 250.0	Matsumoto City Museum of Art
14	Night	1991	Acrylic on canvas	250.0 × 200.0	Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo
15	Dark Rock V	1991	Acrylic on canvas	200.0 × 250.0	Private collection
16	Light Shining in Wilderness II	1993	Acrylic on canvas	250.0 × 200.0	The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo
17	Light Spreading in Wilderness II	1993	Acrylic on canvas	188.0 × 273.0	Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art
18	Landscape-Like Surface Vibrates III	1993	Acrylic on canvas	182.0 × 227.0	Kurashiki City Art Museum
19	Descending Light II	1995	Acrylic on canvas	250.0 × 200.0	G foundation collection (Tokyo, Kuala Lumpur)
21	Thinly Dissolved Blue	1995	Acrylic on canvas	130.3 × 162.1	Hino Gallery

## Thoughts on Green, 2005–2019

In 1995, while acknowledging the difficulty of green, which easily reminds us of the nature in reality, Matsumoto wrote, “One day, I want to make an autonomous green painting.” She continued, “Brushwork in sap green would surely be attractive.” Based on the practice already carried out in her drawings, she was already thinking of “line-drawn” color planes.<sup>1</sup>

After her solo exhibition in September 1997, at which she presented oil paintings for the first time in thirty or so years, Matsumoto commented, “After doing oil paintings for another few years, [. . .] what I want to do next is to paint airy acrylic paintings in sap green or yellow green.”<sup>2</sup> However, it was not until 2005, in oil painting, that she began her quest for green in full. For an exhibition which began in June that year at The Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura, she was encouraged to create new green works following what she had said in the past. The result was four paintings including *Personal Sight* [no. 26], which were completed in a month, giving her a sense of accomplishment.

She drew on a thinly primed cotton canvas in charcoal, onto which she applied pink, orange, white, blue, and several types of green oil paint with a paintbrush, and orange and white line drawing in pastel. One of the reasons she switched from acrylic to oil painting was that it had become physically straining to keep crouching over a canvas laid on the floor. Even when she worked with a canvas leaned against the wall, she would occasionally turn it around. Having said so, the

way the composition of *Thinking Circuit I* [no. 27] is strikingly divided into top and bottom in green and white color planes demonstrates a new sense of space, which continues to the present.

When Matsumoto first chose green, the image she had in mind was a vertical picture like a hanging scroll, but the painting that resulted was horizontal. Accepting association of natural objects from the image and pursuit of invisible “organisms” allowed the artist to turn her attention to visible and tactile “nature.” While continuing to use many of the titles she chose for her acrylic paintings, when working on an oil painting, which requires more time, Matsumoto says there are occasions midway, when she feels the work is giving her instructions.

From 2005, when Matsumoto began working on green, to the present, she has been holding solo exhibitions at the art gallery with which she is affiliated on a regular basis. In 2009, she took part in a large-scale two-person exhibition at the National Art Center, Tokyo entitled *Light*. Like her pursuit of acrylic painting, her quest for oil paintings of her own based on green turned out to be a long undertaking, which lasted for approximately fifteen years, and was to evolve further into blue, a color Matsumoto regards just as important as green.

<sup>1</sup> *Allegory of Seeing*, exh. cat. (Tokyo: Sezon Museum of Art, 1995), 67.

<sup>2</sup> Matsumoto Yoko and Takagi Shu, “Painting: A Leap toward an Inevitable Development” [in Japanese], *Acrylart* 33, January 1998, 5–11.

No.	Title	Date	Technique and materials	Dimensions	Collection
26	<i>Personal Sight</i>	2005	Oil, charcoal and pastel on canvas	200.0 × 250.3	The Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura & Hayama
28	<i>Light Shining on the Horizon</i>	2008	Oil, charcoal and pastel on canvas	193.0 × 259.0	Matsumoto City Museum of Art
30	<i>Transformation III</i>	2013	Oil, charcoal and pastel on canvas	130.5 × 194.0	Nagano Masaharu
31	<i>Ether of the Universe Again</i>	2016	Oil, charcoal and pastel on canvas	181.7 × 227.3	Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo
32	<i>Landscape-Like Surface Vibrates</i>	2017	Oil, charcoal and pastel on canvas	200.0 × 250.0	UESHIMA MUSEUM COLLECTION
33	<i>Landscape-Like Surface Vibrates</i>	2019	Oil, charcoal and pastel on canvas	200.0 × 200.0	Private collection

## Beginning a Journey, 1959–1985

When Matsumoto Yoko returned to Tokyo after living in wartime evacuation for six or so months, all she could see was burnt-out ruins. She spent the postwar reconstruction period in Meguro, Tokyo. She began attending a private painting class from when she was eleven, and majored in art at senior high school too. In 1956, she entered Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music (present-day Tokyo University of the Arts) aged twenty.

In those days, figurative representation of the human body and solid *matière* were the mainstream at the university. To Matsumoto, who was attracted to Henri Matisse's bright coloring, the classes appeared dark. In the autumn of her first year at the university, she saw *Art of the World Today*, an exhibition held at Nihombashi Takashimaya. Postwar European, American, and Japanese art were introduced there, among which Art Informel, a new trend of indefinite abstraction, had a significant influence on the Japanese art world. Having learned about contemporaneous abstract expressions, she began working alone on abstract paintings. She later recalled, "The mere fact that I was painting abstraction put me under an illusion that the edge of my painting and each one of the brushstrokes were connected to the world."<sup>1</sup> With additional encouragement from her academic advisor Koiso Ryohei (1903–1988), Matsumoto determined the direction in which she would head.

In April 1960, just after graduating from university, Matsumoto won "The Tenth Anniversary Grand Prize" at *The Modern Art Exhibition*. The

following year, she held a solo exhibition at an art gallery and gained reputation. In those days, she produced abstract paintings composed of color planes, and the color pink already emerged. She appeared to have made a favorable start as a rising artist.

Yet, she was unable to dispel the uncomfortableness she had been feeling about oil paint from her university days. Unable to realize her ideal of paintings, her work stagnated. In 1967, she married Fujieda Teruo (1936–2018), an art historian and art critic who was also a graduate of Tokyo University of the Arts. Fujieda went to study in the US, and Matsumoto accompanied him. She absorbed American abstract art in Cleveland and New York, and encountered acrylic paint, a new material developed from the 1930s, and raw (unprimed) cotton canvas. Such incidents proved a significant turning point for her.

After spending a year abroad, Matsumoto returned to Japan. While managing housework and parenting, she produced works employing acrylic paint and raw cotton canvas. These works were presented for the first time at a solo exhibition in 1974. While some pointed out that she was influenced by Art Informel, her persistent attitude and accomplishments were received favorably. Thereafter, from the end of the 1970s to the 1980s, she continued steady progress in painting and presenting her works.

<sup>1</sup> "<Survey: My Student/Trainee Years> Resistance against Academism" [in Japanese], *Bijutsu techo*, July 1984 extra issue, 44 – 45.

No.	Title	Date	Technique and materials	Dimensions	Collection
1	Work I	1959–1960	Oil on canvas	130.0 × 194.0	Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo
2	Work III	1962	Oil on canvas	146.0 × 146.0	Private collection
3	Work V	1965	Oil on canvas	130.5 × 194.5	The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto
4	Shapes in Nature I	1974	Acrylic on canvas	146.0 × 146.0	Private collection
5	Darkness Against Nature I	1974	Acrylic on canvas	130.0 × 162.0	Private collection
6	Chaos(Gray)	1978	Acrylic on canvas	135.0 × 194.0	Private collection
7	As Background II	1982	Acrylic on canvas	200.0 × 200.0	Private collection
8	Chaos	1985	Acrylic on canvas	135.0 × 194.0	Private collection

[Exhibition Room3]

## Spirit Resonance, 2003–2010

The summer of 2003 was the coolest it had been in ten years. The acrylic paintings on canvas, which Matsumoto normally completed in one day, did not dry. Consequently, exceptional cases in which she spent two days on one work emerged. With a gray produced by mixing colors as the key tone, she placed white on top of it, resulting in pictures with more clearly contoured lines of different shades compared to before. This provided her works with an ink-wash-painting-like atmosphere.

When Matsumoto was preparing a solo exhibition to be held in the autumn of 2003, the curator proposed “Ether Universe” as the exhibition title. This was conceived from a theory formulated by Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), a German anthroposophist and esotericist. “Ether” is a material Aristotle defined as “the fifth element” which makes up the heavenly bodies in classical philosophy. In early modern physics, it referred to a virtual substance considered to propagate light. Having read a book by Steiner, in which he called an invisible spiritual existence of a higher order compared to the physical body an “etheric body,” Matsumoto felt this had something in common with her own works which she had entitled “living beings” from the mid-1990s, and used it for the title of her works too [nos. 22, 23].

An image in which figure and ground are incessantly reversed breathes as if it were alive and reveals a space which closes in on the viewer. From the moment Matsumoto obtained water-soluble

acrylic paint, her paintings, which she herself likened to “colored ink-wash paintings,” embodied “spirit resonance” pursuing dynamism of vitality (elegance), i.e., one of the six principles (bases for assessment) of Chinese painting.

To Matsumoto, darkness as the shadow of light and blanks are also colors. Looking back, one might say that the “ink-wash-painting”-like line drawing exemplified in the two works entitled *Ether of the Universe* were induced from her preceding oil paintings mixed with charcoal and pastel. In the mid-1990s, having felt she had achieved a certain goal in acrylic painting, aiming at self-transformation, she resumed oil painting after a blank of approximately thirty years. In doing so, with Édouard Manet (1832–1883) and the “spontaneous black” in Abstract Expressionist paintings in mind, she created a dark brown of her own, as she had done with her acrylic paints, by adding burnt umber to ultramarine blue, as “black.” By dissolving charcoal powder in this, she painted a space of dark and light with a sense of immense depth and movement of life in multicolored lines.

*Regarding Living Beings* [no. 25], which the artist calls a canvas drawing, incorporates line drawing extensively as color planes. The fruit and influence of the charcoal and pastel drawings [nos. 40–44], many of which she worked on in winter, when it was too cold to do acrylic paintings requiring a lot of water, should not be overlooked here.

No.	Title	Date	Technique and materials	Dimensions	Collection
22	Ether of the Universe I	2003	Acrylic on canvas	200.0 × 250.0	Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo
24	Black on the Border Line	2003	Oil, charcoal and pastel on canvas	162.0 × 130.3	The Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura & Hayama
25	Regarding Living Beings	2010	Oil, charcoal and pastel on canvas	200.0 × 200.0	G foundation collection (Tokyo, Kuala Lumpur)

[Exhibition Room3,Exhibition lobby]

## Drawings

When painting on a canvas, Matsumoto does not do any underdrawings or studies. She says she starts painting without a concrete image. Her drawings done in watercolor, charcoal, conté, etc. on paper are exercises to awaken her hands and mind and check her own condition. It seems they are, to a considerable degree, training to strengthen her judgment when confronting a large painting. Yet, the lines drawn on thin paper, unlike a resilient canvas, also exhibit a relaxed carefreeness.

Matsumoto uses numerous bright colors or

places the deep black of charcoal on the image. The lines done in conté or charcoal are delicate, indicating movement in a shallow space.

Acrylic paintings are completed in one day, and oil paintings require several days. In both cases, Matsumoto concentrates on painting without fixing a destination point beforehand. By moving her hands, she lets her body follow the route as it comes. The attitude with which she confronts her paintings with her entire body can be sensed in her drawings too.

No.	Title	Date	Technique and materials	Dimensions	Collection
41	Drawing	1991	Charcoal on paper	100.5 × 65.5	Private collection
42	Drawing	1991	Charcoal on paper	100.5 × 65.5	Private collection
Sketchbooks					Private collection

No.	Title	Date	Technique and materials	Dimensions	Collection
40	Scenery of the Sky	1989	Acrylic on canvas	45.7 × 53.1	Hino Gallery



## Chronology

- 1936 May: Born in Uenohara, Nakano-ku, Tokyo.
- 1945 March: Group evacuation to Nirasaki-cho, Yamanashi. October: Returned to Tokyo.
- 1956 April: Entered the Painting Department of Tokyo University of the Arts.
- 1960 March: Graduated from the Painting Department of Tokyo University of the Arts.  
April: Three abstract paintings were first selected for *The Modern Art Exhibition*, and won the 10th Anniversary Grand Prize.
- 1967 June: Married Fujieda Teruo, an art critic.  
August: Went to the USA and stayed in Cleveland, Ohio.  
December: Moved to New York. Visited museums and art galleries. Became aware of acrylic paint (Liquitex) and unprimed raw cotton canvas.
- 1968 August: Returned to Japan from New York and settled in Meguro-ku, Tokyo.
- 1974 Developed her own technique by making a synthesis of acrylic paint with a gloss polymer medium on raw cotton canvas primed with gesso. Paintings predominantly in pink color were produced.
- 1978 October–November: Held a solo exhibition at Koh Gallery, Tokyo, exhibiting twelve acrylic paintings.
- 1987 Moved to Koganei city, Tokyo.
- 1991 May–June: Held a solo exhibition *Recent Works* at the National Museum of Art, Osaka.
- 1996 September: Held a solo exhibition at Akira Ikeda Gallery, Tokyo. Seven oil paintings for the first time in 27 years were exhibited.
- 2005 January–February: Held a solo exhibition at Hino Gallery, Tokyo. Since then, continues to hold solo exhibitions regularly at the gallery.  
June–September: Exhibited in *Today's Artists X: Nishimura Morio / Matsumoto Yoko* at the Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura, Kanagawa. Exhibited four oil paintings in green for the first time.
- 2009 August–October: Exhibited 47 works from 1982–2009 in *The Light: MATSUMOTO Yoko / NOGUCHI Rika* at The National Art Center, Tokyo.
- 2020 March: Moved the studio to her home from Sennin-cho, Hachioji city, which was her production space for nearly 30 years.
- 2023 March–June: All of Matsumoto's works, which were in the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, were exhibited in *MOT Collection: Membrane of the Time/Breathing*.
- 2024 Held a solo exhibition at White Cube Mason's Yard, London and White Cube New York.
- 2025 May–June: Held a solo exhibition at Hino Gallery, Tokyo. Blue oil paintings were presented for the first time in Japan.