

FRIEZE

Sites of Discovery: Ales Ortuzar on Takako Yamaguchi

The New York gallerist reflects on discovering the Los Angeles painter whose work melds visual languages to create otherworldly visions

BY ALES ORTUZAR | 07 OCT 26



I first encountered Takako Yamaguchi's work in 2021, in an exhibition at Stars Gallery in Los Angeles that brought together paintings from the 1990s and 2000s. I remember being immediately struck by both its beauty and its peculiarity. The paintings seemed to exist outside the conversations that define contemporary art. I couldn't quite place them, and that was enormously exciting.

Yamaguchi brings together visual languages that we are accustomed to thinking of as separate, even incompatible: abstraction and representation, decoration and conceptual rigour, the handmade and the referential. Her paintings can evoke textiles, architecture, landscape or modernist geometry, but they never resolve themselves into any one of those things. As I came to understand her broader practice, I recognized an incredible precision in the way she moves between genres and histories, producing images that feel immediately familiar while remaining difficult to locate.



Takako Yamaguchi, *Silent H #3*, 1982. Oil, acrylic and bronze leaf on paper, 120 × 210 cm. Courtesy: © Takako Yamaguchi, Ortuzar, New York, and as-is, Los Angeles. Photo: Steven Probert

I was most surprised by how timely the work felt. These were paintings made decades earlier, yet they seemed completely attuned to questions that artists are grappling with now: how images circulate, how categories of taste are constructed and how histories excluded from dominant narratives can suddenly become newly visible. Discovering Yamaguchi's work was one of those rare experiences in which you encounter an artist who is so fully formed, and yet there is still so much more to be understood. It's been gratifying to see that others have had a similar response, with her inclusion in the 2024 Whitney Biennial and her first solo museum exhibition in her hometown of Los Angeles at the Museum of Contemporary Art last year – and to watch as she continues to explore wide-ranging and unexpected territory in her new work.

At Frieze Masters, Takako Yamaguchi is included in Ortuzar's presentation (Stand F3).

This article first appeared in Frieze Masters magazine 2026 under the title 'Sites of Discovery: Ales Ortuzar on Takako Yamaguchi'.

Further Information

Frieze London and Frieze Masters The Regent's Park, 14 – 18 October 2026.

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Frieze London and Frieze Masters are supported by global lead partner Deutsche Bank

Main image: Takako Yamaguchi, Silent H #3, 1982, oil, acrylic and bronze leaf on paper, 1.2 × 2.1m. Courtesy: © Takako Yamaguchi, Ortuzar, New York, and as-is, Los Angeles; photograph: Steven Probert



Ales Ortuzar

is the founder of Ortuzar gallery, New York, US.