



## TULSA PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

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# COLOR AND SERENITY: THE PAINTINGS BY MICHIO TAKAYAMA

Tulsa, Ok. Taos and Tokyo come to Tulsa in June when *Color and Serenity: The Paintings by Michio Takayama* opens in the PAC's Gallery.

Always growing and ever-changing, Takayama injected into his work a blend of Eastern and Occidental aesthetics, deeply felt emotion and a penchant for the abstract. He could express passion and peace in a single painting — one an extension of the other. The dramatic interplay of emotion, of space and luminous color resulted in a body of work that is easily revisited.

The tenets of Zen and the writing of Zen masters were seminal to Takayama. "Nature has been my prime motif," he said in a 1988 interview with the PAC's Nancy Hermann for *Art Gallery International* magazine, "but more and more to express my inner feelings I have turned to Zen and to remembering many Japanese poems and Zen teachings I learned when I was younger."

The artist was born near Tokyo in 1903 to an aristocratic family descended from a samurai. After obtaining a degree in law at the Meiji University, he continued the family tradition by working at a bank. An artist at heart, he pursued training with noted contemporary landscape artist Shin Kurihara. During the Second World War, he painted military themes as a means of obtaining canvas and paint. Takayama's decision to abandon banking for art led to a rift with his family that was mended years later when he was honored by the Japanese government for his work.

After first moving to Los Angeles in the 1950s, he and his wife relocated to New Mexico, to a home built on a hillside at the outskirts of Taos adjacent to Indian land and a national forest. Takayama made many good friends in the Native American community. He believed that the Indian manner of thinking was very much like that of the Japanese.

The artist loved music and would paint to the sounds of Beethoven and Schubert, two of his favorites. He also listened to opera — to Caruso and La Boheme — and sometimes to Japanese folk music. "I hear the harmony and visualize it in the colors, and in the balance," he said.

The texture of Takayama's canvases is created with a palette knife, sharpened chopsticks and sandpaper, among other devices. Texture and color combine to create surface variations that greatly expand the painting's expressive depth. He'd been known to work on a painting for a full decade, repainting until he felt it was right.

Often witty and nostalgic, his work also inspires a sense of mysticism. "I am not going to conjure up anything mystical," he said. "It is because I am Japanese — an Easterner. The thinking, the virtues are different. The mystical just comes out."

Takayama died in 1994. His daughter, Yoko Tuel, is a long-time Tulsa resident.

*Color and Serenity: The Paintings by Michio Takayama* will be on display and for sale in the PAC's Gallery from June 5 to July 6. The artist's estate is represented The Gallery at 6th and 6th, located in Tucson, Arizona ([www.sixthandsixth.com](http://www.sixthandsixth.com)). The gallery's director, Lauren Rabb, will be in Tulsa to mount the show. The PAC Gallery is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and during Chapman Music Hall events. Admission is free.