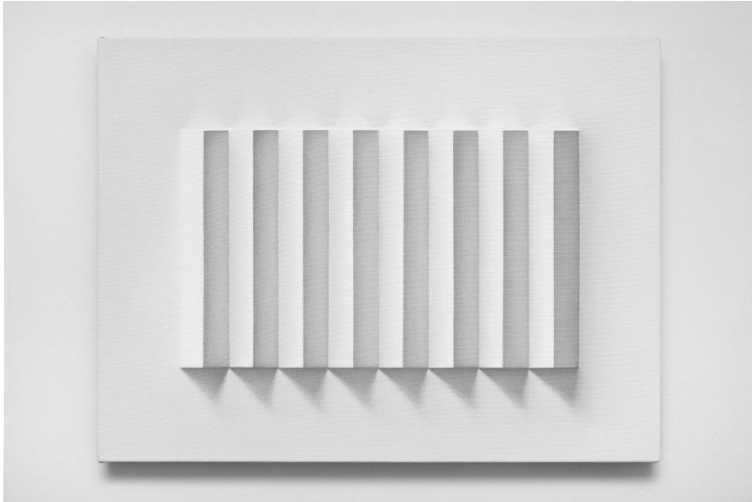


Leah Ollman. "Review: Takako Yamaguchi turns white and gray paint into illusions of startling intensity," *Los Angeles Times*, November 18, 2019.

## Los Angeles Times



The first visual sweep of the gallery walls at the Pico-Union gallery *As Is* leaves an impression of extreme restraint. Takako Yamaguchi's 17 oils on linen are all of the same modest size (18 by 24 inches) and hushed palette, a narrow spectrum of cool whites veering toward gray, and warm whites leaning brown. But the whisper too is a rhetorical device, capable of carrying as much intensity and urgency as a shout — and a lot more virtuosity.

Geometry prevails in these untitled works. The L.A.-based Yamaguchi either presents the canvas as if a sculptural element itself, painted with ridges and creases and layers of depth, or treats it as a neutral surface upon which she renders a form atop (parallelogram, eye, grid of circles), as though in shallow relief. As she plays with illusion and dimension, these

highly reduced images open up, their formal distillation yielding conceptual complexity.

In one quiet dazzler, an accordion-fold panel appears set on the surface, casting such convincing triangular shadows that you might tilt your gaze to confirm that the canvas is flat. Another features side-by-side circles, one that looks like a convex mound, the other like a concave scoop. One painting appears overlaid with horizontal bands, slim steps that rise and fall like some distant descendant of M.C. Escher. Several pieces have surfaces that mimic paper that has been folded, then re-opened and flattened, like origami in progress. Yamaguchi is deft with the volume control, finding a sweet spot between dialed-down Op Art, straight-ahead trompe l'oeil and amped-up monochrome minimalism.

Earlier work embraced the stylized and ornamental more explicitly, drawing from kimono fabrics and Japanese screen painting, the landscapes of Roger Brown and the animism of such early modernists as Agnes Pelton. Yamaguchi is represented in "With Pleasure," MOCA's current survey of the Pattern and Decoration movement. In her last show at *As Is*, she

presented a series of small, tightly cropped views of her chest or waist, her garments rendered with meticulous tenderness: crochet top, trench coat, cardigan. The paintings resonated with Victoria Gitman's exquisite portraits of vintage beaded and feathered handbags in their invocations of hand labor, signifiers of female identity and adorned surfaces as second skins.

These new paintings are less sensual, more like optical or intellectual exercises. Their implied textures are more anonymous, suggestive of blank paper or something molded, padded or blind-embossed. As calm as these pared-down performances seem, however, they still generate a wild whirl of challenge and gratification. Even from just white, gray and brown, technicolor sparks fly.




## STARS

Jody Zellen. "Pick of the Week," *What's on LA*, December 12, 2019.


For her 2018 exhibition at As Is gallery, Takako Yamaguchi displayed nine paintings that focused on women's clothing. Each piece was a self portrait of sorts as Yamaguchi was photographed in these outfits for the purpose of the painting. In these images, Yamaguchi cropped the body closely and never showed the face, but rather concentrated on the details and the specificities of the fabric, buttons and zippers. The eye gravitated to the textures and the precision of the painted renderings of the clothed body.

In her current exhibition, Yamaguchi presents seventeen minimalist, quasi-monochromatic, oil on linen paintings, all 18 x 24 inches. These trompe l'oeil works explore the optical illusions that occur when 3D becomes 2D. To create each painting, Yamaguchi constructed models that combined basic shapes— triangles, squares, circles, parallelograms, and rectangles— into geometric structures. These structures were then lit and photographed. Well aware that photography flattens space, Yamaguchi tasked herself with creating realistic representations of the photographs, carefully painting the white shapes, their shadows and varying tonalities to suggest their original depth.

Each painting depicts a low relief or built form against a white ground. Untitled (7), (all works 2017-2019) approximates a section of metal siding with triangular folds. One side of each of eight vertical strips is light, while the other side is painted a darker shade to suggest it is in shadow. This simple, yet strange illusion of depth is remarkably convincing. A similar illusion occurs in Untitled (4) where Yamaguchi paints two circles that appear to have been excised from the base rectangle. They sit side by side like two holes in the surface of the linen. Untitled (11) depicts a pair of concave and convex circles painted with absolute veracity.



The mind's eye understands that these are paintings of three dimensional forms, yet as presented, they are flat surfaces. The illusion is so realistic, it is tempting to look at the paintings from the side to make sure they are not sculptural. The push-pull— abstract/representational, photograph/painting— that Yamaguchi creates is what gives this body of work its magic.



That Yamaguchi is a skilled and conceptually savvy painter with a keen eye and a sharp wit is a given. While the paintings share a kinship with geometric abstraction and can be placed within the canon of monochrome and white on white paintings, this project feels like a conceptual undertaking. Yamaguchi creates hyper-real representations of abstract originals while literally and figuratively playing with what is above and below the surface. The works resonate beyond their simple configurations and demand to be appreciated on multiple levels.