

## Kenzi Shiokava

June 3 – July 15, 2023

Opening Reception:  
June 3, 6-8pm  
720 N. Highland Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90038



*LA Kachina*, 2003  
Douglas-Fir Molding wood boxes, paint [Wood, found object]  
78 x 16 x 12 in  
198.1 x 40.6 x 30.5 cm  
© Kenzi Shiokava Estate. Photo Credit: Takayoshi Nonaka-Hill

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Nonaka-Hill is honored to announce the representation of the estate of Kenzi Shiokava (1938-2021). For over 50 years, Shiokava lovingly transformed found materials into syncretic sculptures that spoke to the heart of transcontinental experience. This is reflected in his multicultural origin story, but also in his intellectual proximity to seminal Los Angeles artists like John Outterbridge, Betye Saar, and Noah Purifoy. Akin to them, Shiokava tacitly addressed his heritage in assemblage, making his works key exemplars of the diasporic condition.

The roots of his practice can be found in Brazil, where he was born and raised by Japanese migrant parents; Shiokava would not visit their homeland until much later in life. He arrived in Los Angeles in 1964 where he lived until his death, becoming a citizen and bringing his American experience to his Japanese-Brazilian heritage. He began his formal art training in the late 1960s as a painter at Chouinard Art Institute (now CalArts), before shifting to sculpture, a medium that unlocked a prism of influence: Indigenous American, African American, Brazilian, Japanese, and American bricolage traditions suddenly informed his use of materials—all of which were procured from the frayed edges of Los Angeles's infrastructure. This included railroad ties and segments of telephone poles, which over the course of several years Shiokava carved into animistic totems. In manipulating their textures, he exposed the differences between his smoothing hand and that of Southern California's natural wonders: smog, wind, and sun. One cannot help but reference Noah Purifoy's monumental series *66 Signs of Neon* (1966), forged from the flotsam and jetsam of the 1965 Watts uprising, another class of natural events; but it spoke to the emotional and archeological potential, which Shiokava later embraced, of materials gleaned from the streets.

While Shiokava was a thoroughly urban artist who made use of industrial materials like telephone wire and scrap metal, he was a gardener and horticulturalist for much of his life. It was a vocation to support himself, but also the means through which he could realize his sculptures through patience, gleaning, and methodical care. He cultivated plants in his yard to provide elements like wood, dried palms, cactus fruits, and koa pods, which were no longer technically alive, but maintained a living and active dimension to his work. In this sense, his assemblages are devotional in nature. As much as they symbolize and organize the morphologies of objects, they remain spiritual in orientation; they point towards an ineffable presence in sculptural materials shaped by time, humanity, and culture; for this reason, they share much in common with the materiality of Simon Rodia's Watts Towers, a work of monumental patience and ambition. The Watts Towers Art Center later became a focal point for Shiokava's immediate community.

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Shiokava's relationship to faith and catholicism, if not always explicit, undergirds much of his project, which can be seen most clearly in his compartmentalized assemblages. They function as reliquaries for toy figurines, dried plants, and other objects, which form symbolic constellations not present in his totemic works. The reliquaries, at once pop art-inflected and sacred, invite the viewer into Shiokava's personal symbology born from gleaning, ruminating, and collecting. While they orient themselves towards the face of the viewer, his totems point upwards. These two directions, one pointing at the viewer, the other to sky—horizontal and vertical—are emblematic of the relational and spiritual nature of Shiokava's art. He built his work for connectivity, to the people and things that tessellated into his community. In this first solo exhibition in his home city since his passing, his works form an argument for his importance to the history of assemblage in Los Angeles.

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Kenzi Shiokava was born in 1938 in São Paulo, Brazil, and died in 2021 in Los Angeles, California. Selected solo exhibitions include *Spiritual Material: Survey of Work by Kenzi Shiokava*, Ben Maltz Gallery, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, CA (2019); Watts Tower Art Center, Los Angeles, CA (1996); Ankrum Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (1979); Chouinard Gallery, Valencia, CA (1972); Kenzi Shiokava, Ankrum Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (1972).

Selected Group exhibitions include *Carve, Cast, and Coil: International Sculpture from the Permanent Collection*, Warehouse Arts Museum, Milwaukee, WI (2019); *A Cris Ouverts Contemporary Art Biennale*, Les Ateliers de Rennes, Rennes, France (2018); *Midtown*, Salon 94 Design, New York, NY (2017); *Transpacific Borderlands: The Art of Japanese Diaspora in Lima, Los Angeles, Mexico City, and São Paulo*, Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles, CA (2017); *Made in L.A 2016: a, the, though, only*, The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA (2016); *Pacific Standard Time: Art in LA 1945-1980, Civic Virtue: The Impact of the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery and Watts Towers Arts Center*, Watts Towers Art Center, Los Angeles, CA (2011); *L.A. Object & David Hammons Body Prints*, Jack Tilton Gallery, New York, New York (2007); *International Art Show*, Art Space One, Itō, Japan (2002); *West Coast Painting and Sculpture*, Oceanside Museum of Art, Oceanside, CA (1997); *"Elusive Paradise" collaborative participation at the Gilbert B. Friesen Visitor Gallery*, MoCA Geffen Contemporary, Los Angeles, CA (1997); *Four Artists*, Brockman Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (1988). Public collections and Museums include Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, California; Warehouse Arts Museum, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Watts Towers Art Center, Los Angeles, California.

For images or more information regarding the exhibition, please contact Nonaka-Hill at [gallery@nonaka-hill.com](mailto:gallery@nonaka-hill.com)

## Kenzi Shiokava

- Biography**
- 1938 Born in São Paulo, Brazil
  - 1968-72 BFA, California Institute of the Arts (formerly Chouinard Art School), Santa Clarita, California
  - 1972-74 MFA, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, California
  - 2021 Kenzi Shiokava passed away at the age of 83.
- Selected Solo Exhibitions**
- 2019 *Spiritual Material: Survey of Work by Kenzi Shiokava*, Ben Maltz Gallery, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, CA
  - 2004 D2 Art, Inglewood, CA
  - 1996 LA Artcore, Los Angeles, CA
  - 1996 Granados2 Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
  - 1994 Watts Tower Arts Center, Los Angeles, CA
  - 1986 Cal-State University, Los Angeles, CA
  - 1983 Cal State Polytechnic University, Pomona, CA
  - 1979 Ankrum Gallery, Los Angeles, , CA
  - 1976 *First Class*, Serisawa Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
  - 1972 California Institute of the Arts (Chouinard) Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
  - 1972 *Kenzi Shiokava*, Ankrum Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- Selected Group Exhibitions**
- 2019 *Carve, Cast, and Coil: International Sculpture from the Permanent Collection*, Warehouse Arts Museum, Milwaukee, WI
  - 2018 *A Cris Ouverts: Les Ateliers de Rennes Biennale*, Rennes, France
  - 2017 *Midtown*, Salon 94 Design, Manhattan, New York
  - 2017 *Transpacific Borderlands: The Art of Japanese Diaspora in Lima, Los Angeles, Mexico City, and São Paulo*, Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles, CA
  - 2016 *Made in L.A 2016: a, the, though, only*, The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA
  - 2013 *Tapping the Third Realm*, Otis College, Los Angeles, CA
  - 2011 *Pacific Standard Time: Art in LA 1945-1980, Civic Virtue: The Impact of the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery and Watts Towers Arts Center*, Watts Towers Arts Center, Los Angeles, CA
  - 2010 *Richard Godfrey, Kenzi Shiokava*, LA Art Core, Los Angeles, CA
  - 2007 *L.A. Object & David Hammons Body Prints*, Jack Tilton Gallery, New York, NY
  - 2006 *Los Angeles and Thailand Artist*, Gallery Astro
  - 2006 *The Space for Silence*, Andrew Shire Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
  - 2005 *Tony Garza (U.S.A.) Kenji Shiokava (Brazil) Lee Kye Song (Korea)*, Modern Art Museum, Los Angeles, CA
  - 2005 *Taste of Brazil Restaurant*, Los Angeles, California

## Kenzi Shiokava

- Selected Group Exhibitions
- 2004 *Inner Light*, Gallery Asto, Los Angeles, CA
  - 2002 *Three-Artist Show*, Dan Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
  - 2002 *International Art Show*, Art Space One, Ito City, Japan
  - 2002 *Lantern of the East Group Show*, Doizaki Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
  - 2001 *Modern Art Museum*, Izukougenn-Art Space One, Japan
  - 2001 *Inaugural Three Person Show*, Art Space One, Ito City, Japan
  - 2001 *Chouinard A Living Legacy*, Oceanside Museum of Art, Oceanside, CA
  - 2000 *Spirit Resonance*, The NoHo Gallery, North Hollywood, CA
  - 1998 4th Pyong Talk International Art Camp, Korea
  - 1998 *Auspicious Spirit*, Museum of Arts Downtown Los Angeles, CA
  - 1997 *Elusive Paradise* collaborative participation at the Gilbert B. Friesen Visitor Gallery  
MOCA Geffen Contemporary, Los Angeles, CA
  - 1997 *West Coast Painting and Sculpture 1997*, Oceanside Museum of Art, Oceanside, CA
  - 1995 *One Vision "1975 / 1995,"* Space Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
  - 1995 *California Connections*, 1078 Gallery, Chico, CA
  - 1993 Pierce College Art Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
  - 1993 LACA Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
  - 1991 LA Artcore, Los Angeles, CA
  - 1991 *Abstract Prospectus*, Sata Fine Art, Costa Mesa, CA
  - 1988 Brockman Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
  - 1988 Saddleback College, Mission Viejo, CA
  - 1987 *Natural Sources*, Angel's Gate Cultural Center, Los Angeles, CA
  - 1986 *Space & Forms*, Joslyn Center of the Arts, Torrance, CA
  - 1985 *Exhibition of Asian Pacific American Artists*, Gallery Scope Center for the Arts, Los Angeles, CA
  - 1983 Roberts Art Gallery, Santa Monica, CA
  - 1983 Occidental College, Los Angeles, CA

- Public Collections / Museum
- Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA
  - Warehouse Art Museum, Milwaukee, WI
  - Watts Towers Arts Center, Los Angeles, CA

## Kenzi Shiokava

### Awards

- 2021 Robert Rauschenberg Foundation - Rauschenberg Artists Fund
- 2016 Mohn Public Recognition Award as determined by a public vote
- 2004 The Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant
- 1988 City of Los Angeles, Mayor's Certificate of Appreciation
- 1983-74 Bram Goldsmith Scholarship at Otis

### Films

- 2022 *Heritage Series: Kenzi Shiokava*, Watts Towers Art Center, Los Angeles, CA
- 2017 *"Transpacific Borderlands" Artist Profile: Kenzi Shiokava*, Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles, CA
- 2016 *Made in LA 2016: Kenzi Shiokava*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA
- 2016 *Kenzi Shiokava on movement*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA
- 2008 *Trading Dirt with Simon Rodia and Allan Kaprow*, Watts Towers Art Center, Los Angeles, CA