

# THE BROAD®

**NEWS**

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## **THE BROAD ANNOUNCES YAYOI KUSAMA: INFINITY MIRRORS SPECIAL EXHIBITION PROGRAMMING**

***Programs contextualize and explore the artist's seven-decade career through performances by Joshua Light Show, Ron Athey and Sean Griffin; film series documents Kusama's performance work***



Image Credits: Joshua Light Show at Barbican Hall. © The Joshua Light Show; Ron Athey in performance, image courtesy of the artist; Yayoi Kusama and Joshua Light Show in performance, image courtesy of Joshua Light Show; Lesley Flanigan in performance, courtesy of the artist; Miho Hatori, image courtesy of the artist; Noveller.

LOS ANGELES, CA—The Broad announced today its programming lineup of performances and film screenings inspired by its upcoming special exhibition, *Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirrors*, the first institutional survey to explore the evolution of the celebrated Japanese artist's immersive Infinity Mirror Rooms. Organized by the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., the exhibition will provide visitors with the unique opportunity to experience six of Kusama's infinity rooms—the artist's most iconic kaleidoscopic environments—alongside large-scale installations and key paintings, sculptures and works on paper from the early 1950s to the present, which contextualize the profound role the concept of self-obliteration, connectivity and infinity have played in the artist's work over

many decades and through diverse media. The exhibition will be on view October 21, 2017-January 1, 2018.

“Through our Kusama exhibition-related programming, The Broad intends to expand our visitors’ understanding of the context in which Kusama’s Infinity Mirror Rooms came about,” explains Ed Patuto, Director of Audience Engagement. “Throughout Kusama’s career, her political, spiritual and aesthetic interests have manifested in diverse forms. The Broad’s programming will provide opportunities to experience the breadth of Kusama’s creative practice through films of her performances as well as through performances by artists like the Joshua Light Show, Ron Athey and Sean Griffin, who engage similar concerns of self-obliteration, repetition and radical connection.”

Kusama’s Happenings and performances of the 1960s laid the conceptual groundwork for her Infinity Mirror Rooms, six of which will be on view at The Broad during the exhibition. These performances embodied the artist’s belief in “self-obliteration,” a term she used to communicate the idea of dissolving oneself totally in order to become one with the universe. Her objective was to achieve radical connectivity—socially, politically and spiritually—an objective shared by many of the movements in the 1960s, including the civil rights, sexual liberation and anti-war movements.

Kusama’s obliteration performances took place in various public spaces throughout New York City, including Washington Square Park, where she hosted nude Body Festivals; the Brooklyn Bridge, where she performed a gay marriage in 1967; and Bill Graham’s rock venue, the Fillmore East in New York City, where she collaborated with Joshua Light Show in 1968.

In conjunction with *Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirrors*, The Broad will present the **Joshua Light Show**, who was paired with Kusama for four performances at the Fillmore East, who will create an immersive environment of light and sound in the spirit of Kusama’s self-obliteration performances with musicians Lesley Flanigan, Miho Hatori’s New Optimism and Noveller. Tickets to the Joshua Light Show performances taking place November 2 through November 4 will also include timed-admission into the *Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirrors* special exhibition.

The Broad will also present looped **screenings of short films** capturing several of the artist’s iconic 1960s performances, as well as more recent short films of Kusama singing, performing and reciting poems, on select Thursdays and Saturdays throughout the run of the exhibition. The film program provides insight into the pivotal role performance has played within Kusama’s practice throughout her career.

In January 2018, following the conclusion of the *Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirrors* exhibition, The Broad will continue its exploration of Kusama’s rich body of work through the United States premiere of **Ron Athey** and **Sean Griffin’s *Gifts of The Spirit: Prophecy, Automatism and Discernment***. The performance is Athey’s vision for an “automatic writing machine,” brought to life in collaboration with the composer Sean Griffin as a performance/installation made up of 16 writers, six typists, a hypnotist, vocalists and musicians.

Tickets for all *Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirrors* exhibition programs are now available for purchase at [www.thebroad.org/programs](http://www.thebroad.org/programs). Note that many programs have limited capacity and that tickets may sell out quickly. Full details on all programs follow at the end of this release.

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## THE BROAD'S YAYOI KUSAMA: INFINITY MIRRORS PROGRAMMING IN DETAIL

### PERFORMANCE SERIES: *Joshua Light Show with Live Musical Performances by Lesley Flanigan, Miho Hatori's New Optimism and Noveller*

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*"... strawberry fields, orchards of lime, antique jewels, galaxies of light over a pure black void and, often, abstract, erotic, totally absorbing shapes and colors for the joy of it—each a vision of an instant..."*  
—Barbara Bell on *Joshua Light Show*, *New York Times*, 1969

In 1968, influential concert promoter Bill Graham paired the Joshua Light Show with The Broad's special exhibition artist Yayoi Kusama to collaborate on four performances at the Fillmore East in New York, where crowds enthusiastically observed Kusama and her performers engage in self-obliteration. For three evenings in November, The Broad invites visitors to step away from contemporary selfie culture to experience an immersive environment of light and sound in the spirit of Kusama's self-obliteration performances. Joshua Light Show will collaborate with musicians Lesley Flanigan, Miho Hatori's *New Optimism and Noveller* to transform The Broad's Oculus Hall into a perpetually evolving kaleidoscope of brilliant color, light and sound. The musical performances are guest-curated by Brandon Stosuy. Tickets include timed admission entry into the *Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirrors* special exhibition, and are available at [thebroad.org/programs](http://thebroad.org/programs).

**Dates:** November 2-4, 2017

**Time:** 8-11 p.m.

**Location:** Oculus Hall at The Broad, 221 S. Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, CA, 90012

**Ticket price:** \$95 (includes timed admission entry into the *Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirrors* special exhibition; available now at [thebroad.org/programs](http://thebroad.org/programs))

#### *About Joshua Light Show*

During their tenure as resident artists at the Fillmore East between 1968 and 1971, Joshua Light Show also shared the bill with legendary musicians such as The Doors, The Grateful Dead, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Chuck Berry and Iron Butterfly. Employing a wide variety of analog image-making apparatus to achieve psychedelic, luminous projections, Joshua Light Show have also performed at Woodstock, Carnegie Hall, the Lincoln Center, Tate Liverpool, Centre Pompidou, the Whitney Museum and other venues, gathering new artists and collaborators along the way, expanding upon their analog ideas and incorporating digital techniques. To further contextualize the work of Yayoi Kusama, and in the lineage of those profoundly immersive experiences of nearly five decades ago, Joshua Light Show will perform at The Broad paired with live musical artists.

#### *About Lesley Flanigan*

New York-based experimental musician Lesley Flanigan builds her instruments using minimal electronics, microphones and speakers, and performs on them alongside traditional instrumentation and her own voice. This process creates a physical electronic music that sculpts sound from a palette of noise and subtle imperfections. Her work has been presented at venues and festivals internationally, including Sonar (Barcelona), Millennium Park (Chicago), the Guggenheim Museum (New York City), The Kitchen (New York City), ISSUE Project Room (Brooklyn), The Stone (New York City) and KW Institute for Contemporary Art (Berlin).

#### *About Miho Hatori's New Optimism*

New York City-based artist Miho Hatori is a singer/musician/visual artist, primarily known for her work as the vocalist of Cibo Matto. *New Optimism* is her solo project. "It all started when I heard the postmodern

term New Sincerity (A movement that dreamed of stamping out hipster irony and reenergizing an apathetic youth culture). New Optimism shows up in dialogue. It is my philosophy, music and vision.” Musically, New Optimism is groove oriented experimental pop music. Hatori has collaborated with the likes of the Gorillaz, Beastie Boys, Handsome Boy Modeling School and many others. On New Optimism’s first EP, she collaborated with Rostam Batmanglij from Vampire Weekend.

#### *About Noveller*

Noveller is the electric guitar project of Los Angeles-based composer and filmmaker Sarah Lipstate. Lipstate summons a sonic palette so rich as to challenge the listener to conceive how it’s housed in a single instrument manipulated by a solitary performer. Noveller has toured with Iggy Pop, St. Vincent, Radiolab, Xiu Xiu, the Jesus Lizard, U.S. Girls and Aidan Baker. She has previously performed as a member of Cold Cave, Parts & Labor and One Umbrella. Lipstate has also participated in Rhys Chatham’s Guitar Army, Ben Frost’s “Music for 6 Guitars” Ensemble and Glenn Branca’s 100-guitar ensemble.

### **FILM SERIES: *Yayoi Kusama Film Screenings***

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In conjunction with *Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirrors*, The Broad will present a screening of short films capturing several of the artist’s iconic 1960s performances, as well as more recent short films of Kusama singing, performing and reciting poems on multiple dates throughout the course of the exhibition. Included in these programs is *Kusama’s Self-Obliteration*, 1967, a film (22 min. 30 sec.) that relates themes of nature and sexuality to the artist’s concept of “self-obliteration.” The film program provides insight into the pivotal role that performance has played within Kusama’s practice throughout her career.

Films will be screened on a loop from noon to 8 p.m. on select Thursdays and Saturdays during the run of the exhibition. Admission to the films is free with either general admission tickets or *Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirrors* exhibition tickets (which includes free general admission). A list of dates is available at [thebroad.org/programs](http://thebroad.org/programs).

The films include:

- Yayoi Kusama, *Songs: “A Manhattan Suicide Addict” “Now That You Have Died (Dedicated to my late parents)”*, 2004 (3 min. 18 sec.)
- Yayoi Kusama, *Flower Obsession: Sunflower*, 2000 (Silent. 2 min. 40 sec.)
- Yayoi Kusama, *Flower Obsession: Garbela*, 1999 (Silent. 1 min. 20 sec.)
- Yayoi Kusama, *Love In Festival*, 1969 (Silent. 3 min. 12 sec.)
- Yayoi Kusama, *Flower Orgy*, 1968 (1 min. 44 sec.)
- Yayoi Kusama, *Kusama’s Self-Obliteration*, 1967 (22 min. 30 sec.)

### **PERFORMANCE: *Gifts of the Spirit: Prophecy, Automatism and Discernment***

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*“I made an extreme turning fifty performance, which was both in line with, and against, Kusama’s Self-Obliteration concept. Rather than the erasure of oneself, the gesture is also grand: erasing the singular emphasis and using infinity as a texture. ‘Gifts of the Spirit’ takes that nugget further: expanding the ‘I’ of my memoir into the randomness of collectively authored text, set with the bloat of an opera.”—Ron Athey*

*Gifts of the Spirit: Prophecy, Automatism and Discernment* is Ron Athey’s vision for an “automatic writing machine,” brought to life in collaboration with the composer Sean Griffin as a performance/installation made up of 16 writers, six typists, a hypnotist, vocalists and musicians. In this work, the artist “completes” his memoir (“Gifts of the Spirit”) together in ecstatic communion with his collaborators. This living machine makes a tightly choreographed and scored visual spectacle bringing together writing, reading and listening into a layered performative action resulting in a collectively authored text and sound score.

Athey has been writing his memoir since 1980 when he moved away from the Pentecostal and Spiritualist practices in which he was raised. His writing describes the experience of having been raised as a living saint within an environment of abuse, vibrating with the energy of the otherworldly, and living without the

faith. The deconsecrated cathedral of St. Vibiana provides the perfect venue for this work which strips faith from ritual and presents the orchestration of ecstatic states as process-based art.

*Gifts of the Spirit* is co-produced by VOLUME, and has been made possible in-part by a grant from the Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts. Guest-curated for VOLUME by Jennifer Doyle.

**Date:** January 25, 2018

**Times:** 7 p.m. and 9 p.m.

**Location:** Vibiana, 214 S. Main Street, Los Angeles, CA, 90012

**Ticket price:** \$25 (on sale November 15, 2017 at [thebroad.org/programs](http://thebroad.org/programs))

#### *About Ron Athey*

Los Angeles-based artist Ron Athey has been working at the vanguard of performance art for 25 years. Self-taught, his work developed out of post-punk/pre-goth scenes, and begins with *Premature Ejaculation* (PE), an early 1980s collaboration with Rozz Williams. Their approach to performance art was informed by the club actions of Johanna Went and the formulation of Industrial Culture (the idea of psycho/neuro acoustics in sound performance). Athey's work often experiments with performing in a trance state, not unlike the Pentecostal spirit states he attained in his childhood religious experiences. In the 1990s, Athey formed a company of performers and made *Torture Trilogy*, a series of works that addressed the AIDS pandemic directly through memorializing and philosophical reflection. This work is characterized by the physical intensity of 1970s body-art canon (e.g. COUM Transmission, Carolee Schneeman and the Viennese Actionists). These performances toured internationally. The trilogy's final chapter, *Deliverance*, was an Arts Council England commission and premiered at the ICA London. In the 2000s, Athey developed genre-stretching theatrical works like *Joyce and The Judas Cradle*, and a series of major solo performances such as *The Solar Anus* (which draws its name and spirit from a Georges Bataille essay, and from the action photographs of Pierre Molinier), *Sebastiane* (which plays with martyrology), *Self-Obliteration Solo* and *Incorruptible Flesh* (a series of solo performance that reflect on Athey's collaborations with the late Lawrence Steger). With this new series, *Gifts of the Spirit*, Athey returns to his Pentecostal roots and expands his practice into performance anchored not by the artist's body, but in his spirit.

#### *About Sean Griffin*

Sean Griffin lives and works in Los Angeles. Encompassing many languages, styles, media and forms, Griffin's unique compositional works rely on interdisciplinary incongruities positioned at the intersection of sound, image, performance and the archive. His works manifest as music, large and small-scale operas, collaborative installations, complex numeric choreographies and historically weighted musical/performance works. His works have been commissioned and presented internationally by venues including REDCAT, the Hammer Museum and LACMA in Los Angeles; June in Buffalo; Volksbühne in Berlin; Secession Vienna in Vienna; Royal Academy and the Tate Modern in London; Festival d'Avignon; Taipei City Arts Festival in Taipei City; Walker Art Center in Minneapolis; Centre Pompidou in Paris; Festival BOM 2010 in Seoul; and EMPAC, The Curtis R. Priem Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center in Troy, New York. He received an MFA from CalArts and a Ph.D. from the University of California, San Diego. He studied with Mel Powell, Chaya Czernowin and George Lewis.

#### *About VOLUME*

VOLUME is a Los Angeles collective dedicated to presenting time-based work by emerging and established artists engaged in sound-based practices. Through performances, concerts, exhibitions, screenings and workshops, VOLUME fosters a critical understanding of politics and aesthetics in relation to sound and sound-based practices.

## **About The Broad**

The Broad is a contemporary art museum founded by philanthropists Eli and Edythe Broad on Grand Avenue in downtown Los Angeles. Designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro in collaboration with Gensler, the museum offers free general admission. The Broad is home to the 2,000 works of art in the Broad collection, which is among the most prominent holdings of postwar and contemporary art worldwide, and presents an active program of rotating temporary exhibitions and innovative audience engagement. The 120,000-square-foot building features two floors of gallery space and is the headquarters of The Broad Art Foundation's worldwide lending library, which has actively loaned collection works to museums around the world since 1984. Since opening in September 2015, The Broad has welcomed more than 1.5 million visitors.

For more information on The Broad and to sign up for updates, please visit [thebroad.org](http://thebroad.org).

## **About the Artist**

Yayoi Kusama was born in Matsumoto, Nagano, in 1929, and works at her studio in Tokyo. She studied traditional Nihonga (Japanese-style) painting in Kyoto and moved to New York City in 1958. There, she was active in avant-garde circles during the formative years of Pop art and Minimalism, exhibiting her work alongside such artists as Andy Warhol, Claes Oldenburg and Allan Kaprow—figures who have cited Kusama as influential to the development of assemblage, environmental art and performative practices. Kusama exhibited widely in Italy, Germany and the Netherlands in the mid-'60s, participating in exhibitions with artists associated with Nul, Zero and the New Tendency in Europe, where she began developing her interest in the optics and interactive elements of mirrors, electric lights, sound and kinetics. Kusama's fame grew in the late 1960s through her radical antiwar happenings, which espoused nudity and polka dots in the streets of New York. Because of ongoing struggles with her health, Kusama returned to Japan in 1973, where she has since resided. In recent years, Kusama has achieved celebrity status as well as tremendous critical respect.

## **About Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirrors**

Organized by Mika Yoshitake, curator at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., *Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirrors* includes the artist's milestone installation *Infinity Mirror Room—Phalli's Field* (1965/2016), a dense and dizzying field of hundreds of red-spotted phallic tubers in a room lined with mirrors. The exhibition contains six Infinity Mirror Rooms in total, including The Broad's own installation, *Infinity Mirrored Room – The Souls of Millions of Light Years Away* (2013), which is one of the museum's most popular artworks on display. A selection of more than 60 paintings, sculptures and works on paper will also be on view, showcasing many of Kusama's lesser-known collages, made after her return to Japan in 1973. These works trace the artist's trajectory from her early surrealist works on paper, Infinity Net paintings and Accumulation assemblages, to recent paintings and soft sculptures, highlighting recurring themes of nature and fantasy, utopia and dystopia, unity and isolation, obsession and detachment, and life and death.

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