

exhibition

March 15th | April 15th, 2023



L'ART DE LA
MATIÈRE

AND THE POST-WAR JAPANESE AVANT-GARDES

IN DIALOGUE WITH

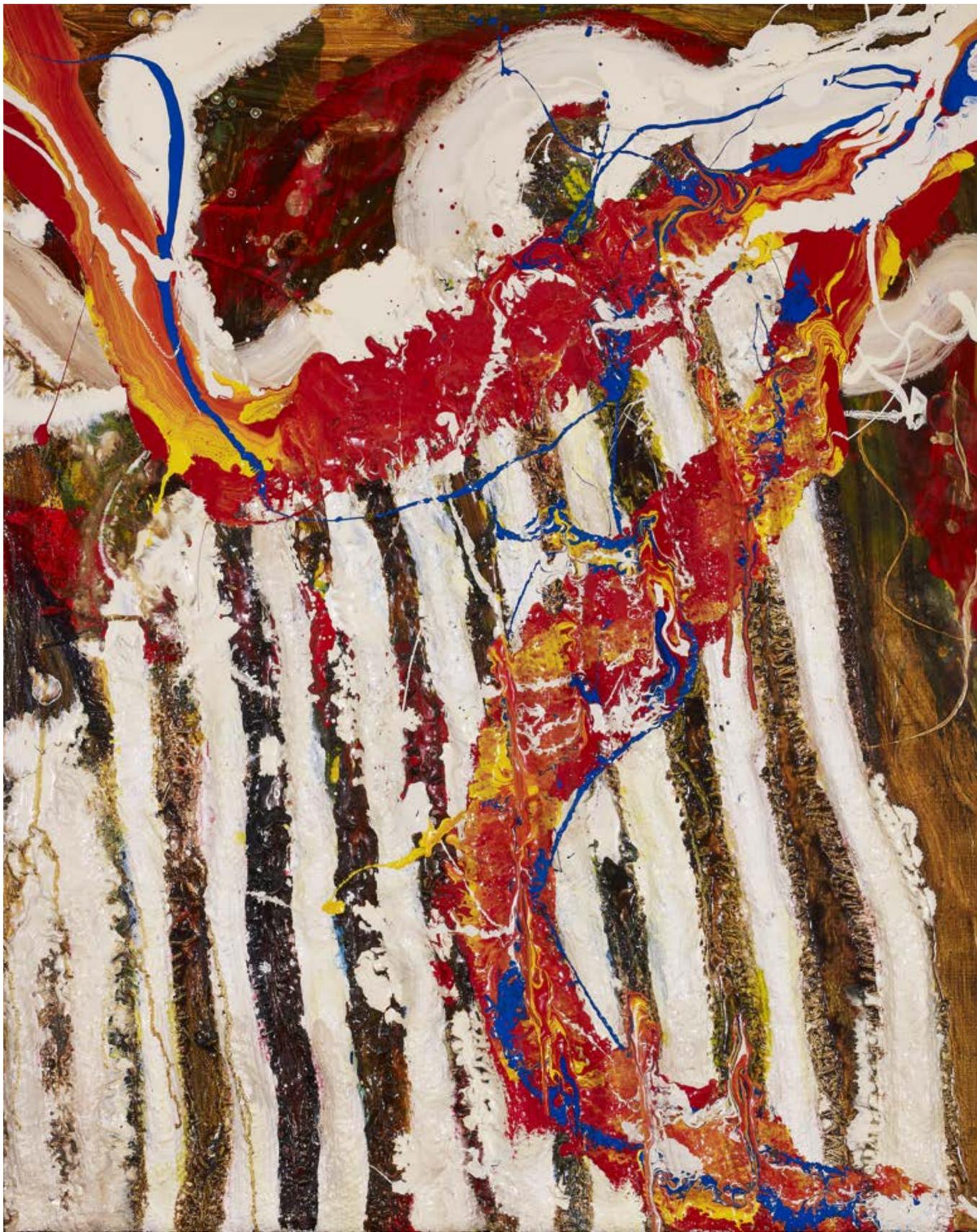
MAURICE RENOMA

L'appart
renoma
mauricerenoma.com

129bis rue de la Pompe, 75116 Paris
Tuesday | Saturday 11 a.m. | 6 p.m.



atari-arts.com



Tsuyoshi MAEKAWA, *Work 140624*, 2010 - 28.34 × 23.62 in

After hosting the Bruno Decharme art brut collection, the **Appart Renoma** opens its doors to the **Gutai movement** and to the **avant-gardes of post-war Japan**, displaying an exhibition that highlights Maurice Renoma's artistic commitment for spontaneous creation and the notion of matter as a means of expression.

From **March 15 to April 15, 2023**, a selection of artworks from artists belonging to the Gutai and Informal movements as well as the New School of Paris and Independents will be presented by **Marc David Fitoussi (Atari Arts gallery)**, testimony of a singularly innovative and revolutionary art which was a source of influence for many other international avant-gardes movements and which contributed to writing the history of the 20th century art.

Invented by Jiro Yoshihara and inspired by surrealism and dadaism movements, Gutai extends from 1954 to 1972. Its name is a contraction of the word *Gu* (instrument) and *Tai* (body): it is thus opposed to classical abstraction because the body becomes a major element in the artistic intervention. A performative movement around matter and founder of action painting practices, the Gutai movement claims freedom and creativity after the trauma of Hiroshima.

The artists brought together for this exhibition express the strength of this Japanese art which combines ancestral traditions with a deep desire to change the customs of their society, in favor of an individualism directly inspired by the Americans who occupied Japan from 1945 to 1951.

After the MoMA in New York (1966), the Centre Pompidou in Paris (1986) and the Guggenheim Museum in New York (2013), the Appart Renoma is honored to welcome this Japanese art from the second half of the 20th century which, apart from these major museum retrospectives, has rarely been the subject of exhibitions outside of Japan due to its nature and its kaleidoscopic character.

Particular attention will be reserved to *Work 140624* (2010) by **Tsuyoshi Maekawa** (picture opposite), a relief canvas coming from the private collection of the Karuizawa New Art Museum (Japan) which - although rather recent in time - is representative of the Gutai originality and strength.

In dialogue with these powerful artworks, Maurice Renoma presents an artistic work centered on three aspects: photography, fashion and Gutai-inspired installations.

A room in the Appart will thus be dedicated to his Japanese photographs, the *Solitudes*, amongst the most intimate of his career: some black and white snapshots taken in Japan in a drawing style, showing his perception of the economic and social crisis in the country.

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The post-war Japanese avant-gardes: exhibited artists

The Gutai movement (*Gutai Bijutsu Kyōkai*, Association for Concrete Art) was born from the clean slate left by the American nuclear attacks on Japan. Far from the capital of the country, in the province of Kansai, young artists had the will to create a completely new and iconoclastic art which in no way obeyed the heavy traditions of Japan or Western art. In fact, the so-called Gutai artworks must be real sensory explosions because, like the *dripping* of Jackson Pollock (as of 1947), it is the very act of painting that becomes a means of expression.

Gutai's spearhead is therefore originality in the abstract expressionism, the quest for new means of expression aiming at totally surpassing already known art practices. It is in natural materials that the movement will find its main source of creation (see for example **Tsuyoshi Maekawa** or **Senkichi Nasaka**). This movement will thus generate many emulators amongst the young Japanese artists who belonged at the same time to the Art Informal movement (see for example **Toshio Arai** or **Toshimitsu Imai** – who are inspired as much by “Gutai” materials as by an “informal” gesture that they associate with a traditional practice of Japanese art).

A little differently, artists like **Hisao Domoto** or **Yasse Tabuchi** are more aquatic in their vision of the traditional Japanese landscape, achieving thus an abstract touch that is both livelier and more nervous. Another major reference, **Key Sato**, who is a so-called “earthly” artist with a dense and internally structured matter, instinctively retrieved the overview perspective of historical paintings from the Kamakura period (1185-1333). Others stick to some “magical” effects of matter which they cultivate with an ancestral skill that is well adapted to their new medium (see for example **Nobuya Abe**, **Aiko Miyawaki** or **Josaku Maeda**). These latter offer us more or less deeply worked high pastes, with heavy effects and bright colors.

Finally, some painters who practice gestural abstraction, work towards a violently expressionist direction and create per se a real Japanese action painting (see for example **Tadashi Sugimata** or **Kazuo Shiraga**, Gutai's flagship artist who stands out very singularly by literally sliding on the canvas “with his feet”).

As for the Japanese painters “from Paris” (see for example **Akira Kito**, **Jun Dobashi**, **Yuzuru Shoji**, **Akira Tanaka** or **Chuta Kimura**) – all emigrants from a country where the tradition of painting is both anchored and refined – they arrived in France to find a way how to solidify their identity and artistic heritage - while wandering at the same time into the *ville des lumières*, world capital of Western art at the time.



Senkichi NASAKA, *Work*, 1963 - 22.04 × 18.50 in

Many of these remarkable avant-gardes' artists – sometimes even “free” of any affiliation with an artistic movement - manage to generate - without shame next to the pioneers of the lyrical abstraction in Europe or the abstract expressionism in America - a unique and almost perfect pictorial synthesis that harmoniously mixes East and West.

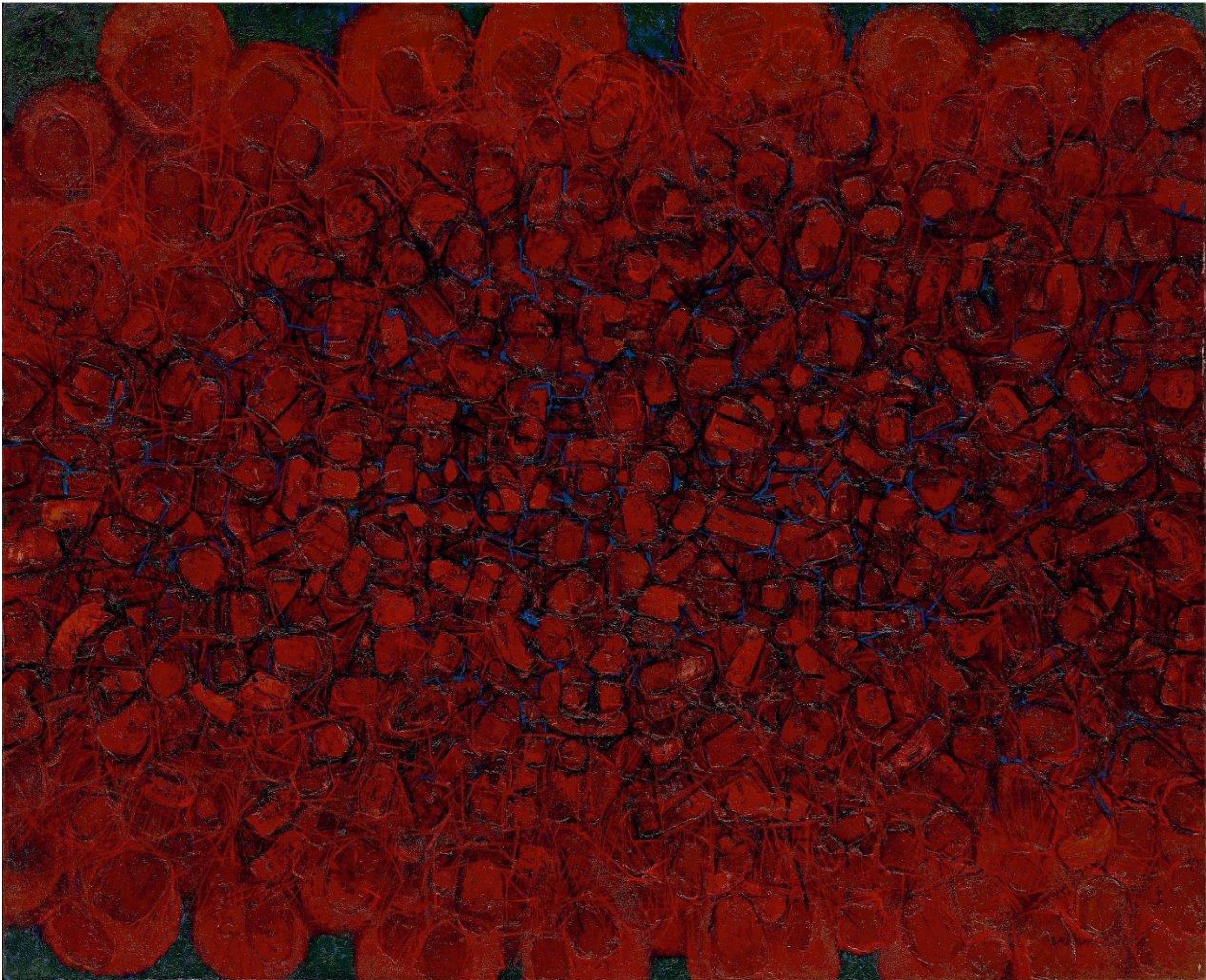
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Sadami AZUMA, *Mass (Red)*, Circa 1958 - 21.25 x 26.37 in

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Solitudes, Maurice Renoma

When Maurice Renoma turns to photography, his camera becomes an accomplice, the witness of his travels throughout the world. With it, Maurice Renoma captures the moment and creates travel diaries in the form of visual notes.

He constantly experiments this field with an autodidact approach on the fringe of artistic trends: cultivating a raw image of his own, he gives shape to the intimate far from the codes of classical representation, resulting in both some sort of hybridization that runs through his work and the establishment of some singular modes of figuration.

During his first stays in Japan, he is touched by the feeling of disarray that he perceived in the streets, amongst the people he met, and felt the need to transpose, even concretize, this vision and contrasts through images.

He then created his *Solitudes*, a photographic series amongst the most intimate of his artistic career, which immortalizes his perception of the economic crisis and social misery during this post-war period in this country so dear to him: fleeting and distracted figures, bodies absent from the present moment, solitudes surrounded by crowds.

These black and white shots present a subtle mixture of both chance and precision that makes the subjects dive into their individuality, in an almost brutal psychic dimension.

Then, Maurice Renoma pushes the photographic language to its limits by transforming these images into objects with drawn, hybrid and delicate traits; he thus gives them a tenderness capable of escaping this toughness while putting a distance between the photographer, the scene and the spectator.



Maurice RENOMA, *Solitude*



Maurice RENOMA, *Solitude*



Maurice RENOMA, *Solitude*

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Aiko MIYAWAKI, *Mirage 2*, 1964 - 21.25 x 21.25 in

Marc David Fitoussi and Atari Arts gallery

Very early on in his career, Marc David Fitoussi became interested in Japanese artists historically attached to France. With nearly 20 years of experience as a collector-sponsor then as an art dealer, he frequently ventured to Japan since 2009 in search for “unseen treasures” to finally succeed in obtaining between 2015 and 2018 (in partnership with Artisy Gallery) a mandate as an exclusive agent in Europe of the Whitestone Gallery (which owns several galleries in Asia - Tokyo, Hong-Kong, Taipei and Singapore - and a private museum in Karuizawa) with the aim of promoting leading Japanese artists of the Gutai and Informal movements.

In 2022, Marc David Fitoussi founded Atari Arts gallery specializing in post-war Japanese artists (mainly from 1955 to 1975) and which mission is to promote this art too often overlooked, despite its indisputable historical importance. The driving spirit of this company lies behind the word “Atari” which in Japanese means “bluff”: around the year 1955, the founding master of Gutai - Jiro Yoshihara - frequently spoke with the artist and co-founder of the movement - Shozo Shimamoto - about a “bluffing art”. The idea was actually to allow future Gutai artists to think outside the self-imposed artistic frame. For Atari Arts, it will be a more modest attempt to promote a «bluffing historical art» likely to take your breath away with its strength and originality.



Maurice Renoma with Jane Birkin and David Bailey (top in the picture), Serge Gainsbourg and Toshimitsu Imai (bottom in the picture)

Maurice Renoma and Japan

Maurice Renoma is an unclassifiable visionary who knew how to create, from fashion to image, an instinctive aesthetic giving life to a transgressive and abundant universe.

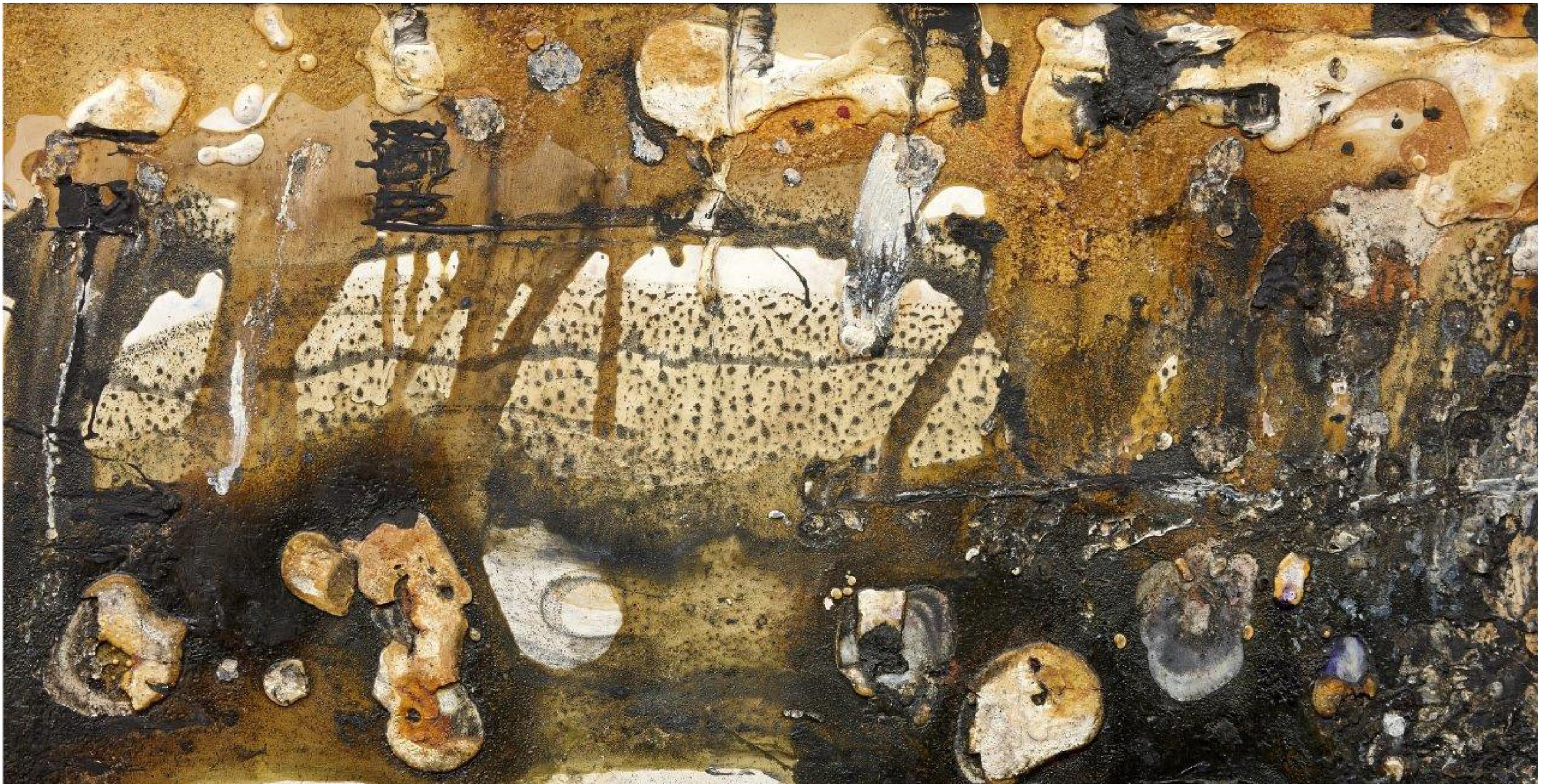
Since the late 1960s, he has forged a deep relationship with Japan that continues to this day. After the country’s reconstruction efforts, the post-war generation demanded the right to loosen their tie and started to become passionate about European fashion and lifestyle: Maurice Renoma is the symbol of this association of talent and freedom, of success and counterculture. He embarked in this market and asked his friends Serge Gainsbourg and Jane Birkin to follow him into this adventure as ambassadors of the brand: for ten years, they would represent Renoma in Japan through the shots of renowned fashion photographers such as David Bailey and Helmut Newton.

Maurice Renoma multiplied his trips to Japan, first for business but above all he brought to this country his free and audacious aesthetic, his way of conceiving art and life. At the same time, he immersed himself into this thousand-year-old culture, including special encounters from the prolific Japanese artistic milieu at the time: he forged notably a deep friendship with the painter Toshimitsu Imai. From his Japanese experience, he nourished his artistic career, his subjects and his creations by freezing moments of daily life, testimony of his love for this country.

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Senkichi NASAKA, *Work*, 1962 - 19.68 × 26.77 in

Gutsū art does not transform, does not divert matter; it gives matter life. It participates in the reconciliation of the human spirit and matter, which is neither assimilated nor subdued to it and which, once revealed as such, will start speaking and even screaming. The spirit fully vivifies it and, reciprocally, the introduction of matter into the spiritual domain contributes to its elevation.

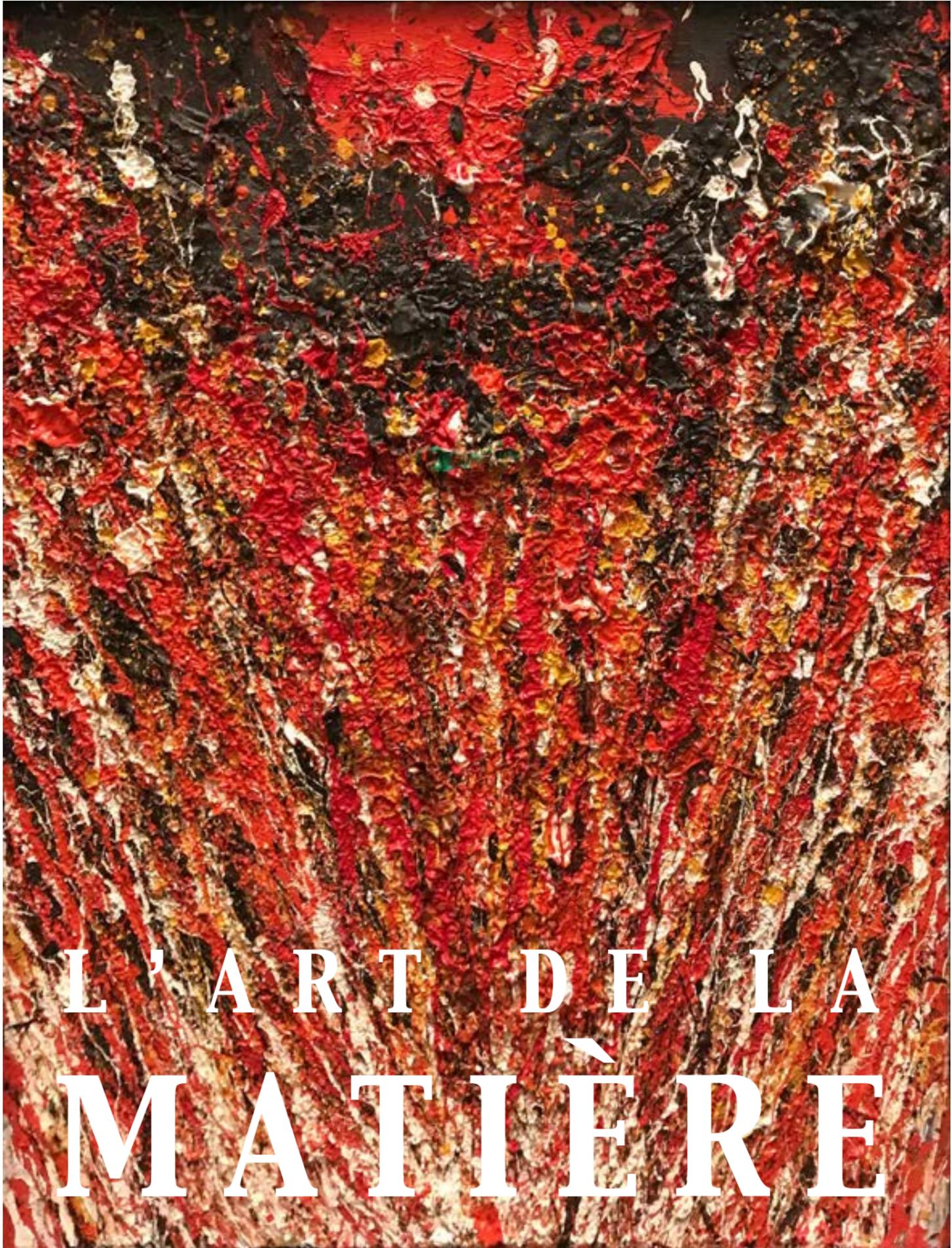
Gutsū Art Manifesto by Jirō Yoshihara,
Geijutsu shincho magazine (*New Artistic Trends*),
published in Tokyo in December 1956

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G U T A I

and the post-war Japanese avant-gardes



Toshimitsu IMAI, *Untitled*, 1962-64 - 21.65 x 14.96 in

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