

JEAN NAGAI

SES

Jean Nagai

Midst Seizen

Opening July 15, 2023 | 2pm - 5pm

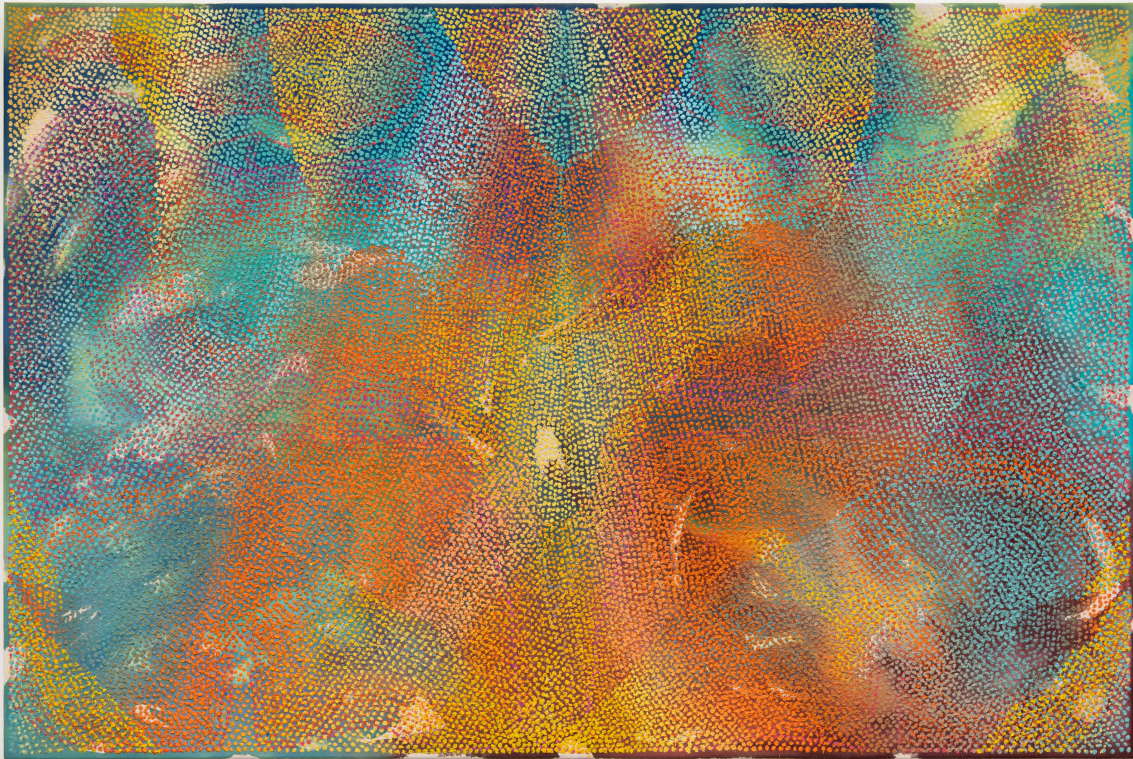
Sow & Tailor is proud to present *Midst Seizen*, a solo exhibition of Los Angeles-based artist Jean Isamu Nagai (b. 1979, Seattle, WA, USA), on view from July 15 to August 12, 2023. An opening reception for the artist will be held on July 15 from 2-5pm.

In the title of his exhibition *Midst Seizen*, the Japanese American artist Jean Isamu Nagai's play on words has a simple yet powerful message for humankind: enjoy the present moment. According to Nagai, the word "midst" refers to layers of reality and is a riff on "mid" and "mist" while the word "seizen" is a play on "season" and "seize." With the climate rapidly changing, Nagai believes that our seasons have become less defined, and our lives are more unpredictable than ever as a result. His latest body of work serves as a reminder to pause and celebrate the connectedness of everything, to embrace science and the supernatural, and to honor both life on Earth and the otherworldly.

His unique trajectory as an artist is key to understanding his perspective and mission. Nagai spent his formative years in Olympia, Washington, a place that developed a countercultural reputation in the seventies. Nagai describes life in the dank capital city as socialist, esoteric, and seemingly utopic for an artist. He immersed himself in the city's underground music scene, designing flyers and T-shirts for bands. Through music he developed a sense for both energy and sensation and how they could be used to access more spiritual states of mind. Nagai was also introduced to mushroom foraging in Olympia, where Fungi Perfecti, a company devoted to researching and developing mushroom-based medicine, is headquartered. He found several edible and medicinal fungi, including psilocybe and panaeolus cyanescens, to enhance his awareness of the natural world, which he believes to be inherently psychedelic. Nagai enjoys the thought of "spreading" this awareness by mixing the spores into the paint he uses, believing that it promises a connection to self reflection and empathy.

Nagai is very much a landscape painter in that his practice is a direct reflection of the world around him, wherever that happens to be. The narrative of his artistic journey can easily be traced through the blue and white palette of his time in the mist of Washington state, through the vibrant ochre and pink color layered like sediment in New Mexico, and through the frenetic sprays of color that reflect his present moment in Los Angeles. Mixing finely ground pumice (a connection to the West Coast's place along the Ring of Fire) with acrylic paints, Nagai also makes a textural reference to the landscape. Some observations linger wherever he goes, and the result is always a colorful canvas where the landscape is abstracted, realistic hints exist on a quantum level, and various signs and symbols offer glimpses of life elsewhere. Nagai hopes that through his unique landscapes viewers can pull back and realize that there are larger, unexplainable, energetic forces at play and that we are but a small part of this ecosystem.

Jean Isamu Nagai (b. 1979, Seattle, WA, USA) is a painter based in Los Angeles. He completed his studies at The Evergreen State College (BA, 2004), where he received the Pell Grant, State Need Grant and JUNO scholarship (2002). He has lectured at North Arizona University, Flagstaff (2016); The Evergreen State College, Olympia (2011); and Western Washington University, Bellingham (2006). Nagai has had solo exhibitions at Chins Gallery, Bangkok (2019); Pt. 2 Gallery, Oakland (2019); Portland State University, Portland (2017); Salon Refu, Olympia (2015); Las Cruces, Austin (2014). He has participated in numerous group exhibitions at Wing Luke Museum, Seattle (2022); The Hole, Los Angeles and New York (2022, 2020); Kellogg Doolittle House, Joshua Tree (2021); SOIL Gallery, Seattle (2020); Spring Break Art Show, New York (2018). Nagai produced several murals in Washington and New Mexico and participated in residencies at the Chins Gallery, Bangkok (2019); Tappan Collective, Los Angeles (2017); and Stairwell Gallery, Providence (2007). Nagai's work has been featured in *Booooooom*.



Core, 2023 by Jean Nagai

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