

Arakawa: Do You Like This Painting?

September 24 – December 18, 2026

Castelli Gallery is pleased to present *Arakawa: Do You Like This Painting?*, the gallery's second exhibition dedicated to Arakawa's work. The exhibition brings together paintings and works on paper dating from 1961 to 1990 that incorporate propositions, instructions, and provocations to break the boundary between artwork and observer.

The exhibition takes its title from the 1969 painting *Blank*. Two checkboxes labeled "Yes" and "No" occupy the center of the painting, with the question below: "Do you like this painting?" Arakawa extends an imaginary invitation to mark the viewer's response. What appears as a playful gesture opens an inquiry on what a painting ultimately is. What is the relationship between painting, representation, and action? Is a painting a matter of liking or taste?

Other works in the exhibition further extend Arakawa's invitation for participation. In 'Untitled', n.d., a work on graph paper, Arakawa instructs, "Please think of your breathing while looking at or reading this," unifying the acts of seeing, reading, and experiencing one's own body. *Detail of..... No. 3*, 1969, tells the viewer to move their eyes across the canvas and "connect the dots into whatever lines you want." Meanwhile, *Open Your Mouth and Then Close Your Eyes*, 1990, contains a paradox by telling the viewer to look at the drawing while closing their eyes.

Untitled No. 3, 1969, is one in a group of works in which Arakawa instructs the viewer to, if possible, steal. Steal what exactly? Drawings on top of the canvas? A sentence? Another painting from this series, *Untitled*, 1969 is currently in the collection of The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art after having indeed been stolen from Arakawa's exhibition at the Dwan Gallery in 1969, Gift of "The Thieves".

A highlight of the exhibition is the 1966 – 67 painting, *Next to the Last*, exhibited in the United States for the first time. The painting is inspired by Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*. Arakawa traces the outlines of the figures at the table, while replacing all objects and architectural elements from the scene with words like "HAND," "BREAD," "PLATE," and "WINDOW." The painting is striking for its power to make the viewer visualize Leonardo's masterpiece, without the use of any figurative elements. With its minimal simplicity, the painting can be understood as a study of what a painting was then and what it is now, while incorporating the linear perspective central to European painting techniques that were later adopted by Japanese artists.

Arakawa was born in Nagoya in 1936 and moved to New York in 1961, immediately joining the New York avantgarde art scene. Beginning in the late 1970s, together with his wife, poet Madeline Gins, Arakawa dedicated the remainder of his life to 'procedural architecture' and created several installations, buildings and parks. The Bioscleave House they built in East Hampton is currently undergoing an extensive restoration and anticipates reopening in 2027. Arakawa died in 2010 in New York. *Arakawa: Do You Like This Painting?* is done in collaboration with the Reversible Destiny Foundation, New York and Arakawa+Gins Tokyo Office.