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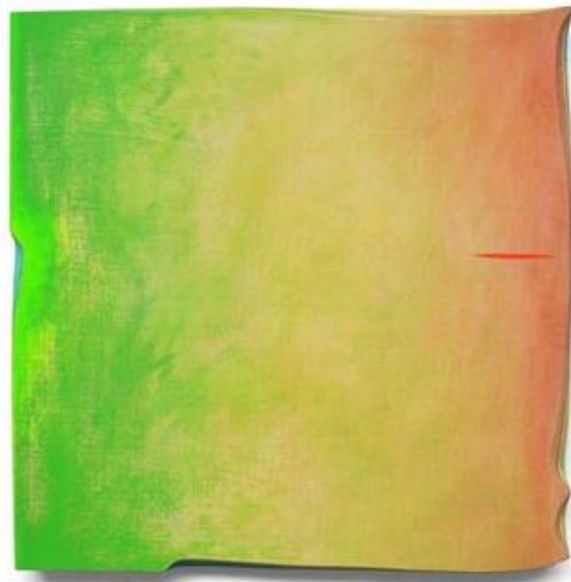
The Buddhist Philosophy Behind Robert Yasuda's Layered, Luminescent Paintings

Artsy Editorial
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There's a quiet simplicity, a meditative quality, to the latest works by the veteran painter [Robert Yasuda](#). It comes as no surprise to learn that the artist, though born in Hawaii and based in New York and Key West, is of Japanese descent, and that his work was influenced by his parents' Buddhist lifestyle.



BD-1st Break, 2015



BD-Greens Break, 2015

"I was an only child and spent a solitary childhood with the ocean and mountains," Yasuda [has said](#) of his formative years. "Hawaii at that time was a sparsely populated dot in the Pacific Ocean." You can practically pick out those landscapes of sea and sky in "[Robert Yasuda: New Paintings](#)," a new exhibit at [David Lusk Gallery](#) in Nashville. Though the paintings are minimal and abstract, there's an oceanic feel to *BD-1st Break* (2015), while the dreamy oranges and yellows of *BD-Greens Break* (2015) evoke a spectacular sunset.



BD-Dusk, 2015



BD-Sunset Break, 2015

Of course, there's more to these luminous paintings than first meets the eye. Yasuda's work is both technically complex and philosophically rich. These aren't regular canvases, for one thing: they're wooden superstructures. First, Yasuda carves and shapes the wood, then layers the surface with acrylic polymers. Then he wraps the piece in diaphanous fabric and layers on more paint. The effect is subtle but magical. Each piece has a unique texture—and each seems to glow from within, as if capturing a fleeting moment when the sun is coming up or going down. "I am trying to create symbols of transcendent moments both in the act of perception and realization," the artist has said.



BD-AM, 2015



BD-PM, 2015



BD-Wisp, 2015

The process of capturing and conveying that transcendent moment may be complicated, but the effect is dazzlingly simple. What's lovelier, after all, than the interplay between light and water, between sky and earth? Any student of Eastern religion or philosophy would be quick to make the connection between Yasuda's works and his cultural background—the primary aesthetic in Japanese culture is that of harmony in nature. These paintings embody the concept of *wabi-sabi*, or the “beauty of simplicity.” Upon viewing Yasuda's radiant works in person, you might feel momentarily swept away to the still, quiet coastline of Japan or Hawaii. Like so many great poets and artists influenced by Eastern philosophy, Yasuda prompts the viewer to contemplate the beauty of the natural world.

—Bridget Gleeson

3000 Chestnut Ave, Mill Centre 214 goyacontemporary.com
Baltimore, Maryland 21211 410 366 2001

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“Robert Yasuda: New Paintings” is on view at David Lusk Gallery, Nashville, Nov. 17–Dec. 23, 2015.