

## LOS ANGELES I'M YOURS

### Mono-ha at Blum & Poe



After being constantly inundated with Pacific Standard Time fanfare, ***Requiem for the Sun: The Art of Mono-ha at Blum & Poe*** was a welcome break. Much like the darlings of Pacific Standard Time, the artists associated with Mono-ha were active during the late sixties and early seventies but many of them are still largely unknown. Mono-ha has been translated from the original Japanese as “School of Things,” and as such those who uphold “Mono-ha” as an accurate grouping of these particular artists (hint: many of the artists themselves do not) identify an encounter between natural and industrial objects as the common thread. At least that was my jumping off point for much of the work.

At Blum & Poe, Mono-ha isn't so much an ideological grouping as a situational one —this show introduces the art for the first time to a West Coast audience. Under the Mono-ha heading are the works of artists Koji Enokura, Noriyuki Haraguchi, Susumu Koshimizu, Katsuhiko Narita, Nobuo Sekine, Kishio Suga, Jiro Takamatsu, Noboru Takayama, Lee Ufan, and Katsuro Yoshida. While the exhibit is organized to introduce these many artists and their "Mono-ha" work, it also slyly draws that same label into question. The art showcased in *Requiem for the Sun* includes many key examples of the Mono-ha movement as well as a few deviants.

The original Mono-ha artworks were largely ephemeral by nature and many are no longer extant. Thus, much of the works on display at Blum & Poe are recreations made for the purposes of this exhibition. One really exciting aspect of *Requiem for the Sun* was the discrepancies between the photographs of the original artworks and experiencing those same works in person. While I had seen many of the 2D images prior to the show, the art took on entirely new dimensions up-close-and-personal. For instance, while I had experienced the work conceptually through the photographs, when I stood before Yoshida's *Cut-off*, a steel pipe filled with cotton, I was overwhelmed by my physical response before I could even begin mental ponderance. Just looking at the pipe bursting with cotton made my hairs stand on end in much the same way as when I hear nails on the chalkboard (quite likely a personal reaction: that squeaking noise cotton makes when pulled apart gives me the heebie-jeebies). At the same time in my mind's eye I wanted to squeeze the tube like a large body pillow, but was immediately mentally thwarted by the steel pipe. In their own way, all of the works elicited a physical reaction.



Similarly, one of the works that I initially passed off through the photograph turned out to be one of my favorite pieces of the entire show. Susumu Koshimizu's *Splitting a Stone* is titled by the exact date and time the stone split into two. The concept seemed simple enough to wrap my head around, but experiencing the work in person was a whole different story. Blum & Poe flew in a stonemason from Japan who then set out to split the stone using only a hammer and metal links. The process of preparing the stone took days and even then the stonemason confided in me that he wasn't sure if it would actually break. I was lucky enough to be there when the big moment finally came. The stone let out a thud that shook the entire parking lot ground; I still can hear the crisp *crack* in my head. What seemed like a simple proposition when contained in a photograph became a completely emotional drama in person. The crowd let out whoops and sighs of relief and I even felt tears welling up from the entire force of the performance. A moment in time indeed.

The show closes this Saturday. For those of you haven't already been, I encourage you to go before the art once again becomes limited to photographs.

