

Larry Poons (b. 1937)

Born in 1937 in Tokyo, Japan, American painter Larry Poons initially pursued a career in music. He studied at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston from 1955 to 1959, but following a visit to a Barnett Newman exhibition at French & Company in New York City in 1959, he changed course and instead began his pursuit of the visual arts. He subsequently enrolled at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. After completing his studies there, he moved to New York to devote himself full time to artistic practice.

Poons held his first solo show in 1963 at Richard Bellamy's celebrated Green Gallery, and two years later his work was included in the influential exhibition *The Responsive Eye*, held at the Museum of Modern Art. Poons's early work from the 1960s was decidedly "optical" in the viewpoint set out by the MoMA show. Composing his paintings according to a mathematically determined series of points and carefully chosen color schemes, Poons was able to eliminate the "hand of the artist," an artistic strategy also being pursued at the time by his close friend Frank Stella.

Eventually Poons came to feel that the purely optical approach to making art was restricting, and in the late 1970s he began to work by pouring and throwing paint on the canvas—again in an attempt to compose a painting without leaving traces of the artist's hand. It was also during this period that he began attaching miscellaneous materials to the canvas—foam balls, for example, or rope. In the 1990s, Poons returned to using a paintbrush, working on rolls of canvas unfurled across the four walls of his studio, so that he could immerse himself in the work as he made it. At the end of this process, he would painstakingly crop out individual paintings from the massive length of each roll.

Nowadays, Poons splits his time between studios in New York City and East Durham, New York. His work continues to be shown widely and most recently was included in the international traveling exhibition, *Painting after Postmodernism, Belgium— USA* (2016-18), curated by Barbara Rose. In 2018, Poons was featured in the HBO documentary *The Price of Everything: An Art World Odyssey* directed by Nathaniel Kahn. His tireless and inimitable trajectory of artistic experimentation has made his work sought after by both private collectors and institutions, and is held in the collections of numerous museums, including the Museum of Fine Art, Boston; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.