

YAYOI KUSAMA MUSEUM

草間彌生美術館

KIDS GUIDE Vol. 2

Why? In the World of Polka Dots



Japanese artist, Yayoi Kusama has created many artworks with polka dots. Today, let's learn about her signature "polka dots"!

❶ When did Kusama start using polka dots in her artworks?



《Untitled》(1939)

This drawing was made by her when she was just 10 years old. Maybe she was around your age?

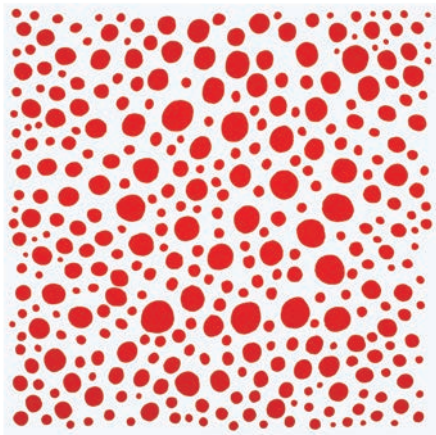
Who do you think is the person in this drawing?
A lady with long hair, wearing a kimono,
a Japanese traditional garment. Could it possibly be her
mom? You might have drawn your close ones before,
like your family or friends, but do you notice
something curious about this particular drawing?

The face , hair , kimono , the background ...
They are all covered in polka dots !

Why did Kusama create such a drawing? From a young
age, she saw visions of her room and her entire body
being covered in polka dots. This drawing seems to
depict her experience of seeing those visions. As a way
to cope with her fear and trauma from these illusionary
experiences, she drew the visions she saw. Instead of
running away from the dots that seemed to be taking
over her world, she began to make them into artworks.
By including them as part of her art, gradually, these
polka dots became something very precious to her.

② Let's start looking into her works with polka dots.

Painting



《PRAYING FOR WORLD PEACE IN THE SUNLIGHT》
(2016)

This painting is on a canvas larger than most adults. Try imagining how Kusama painted these red dots one by one on the gigantic canvas.



She creates artworks of pumpkins, too!
These polka dots are very colorful!

Sculpture



《PUMPKIN》(2015)

A sculpture of a shiny, silver pumpkin.

If you stand in front of it, and look in between the polka dots, you can see your own reflection on the pumpkin.



When an entire space is transformed into an artwork, it is called an installation.

Installation



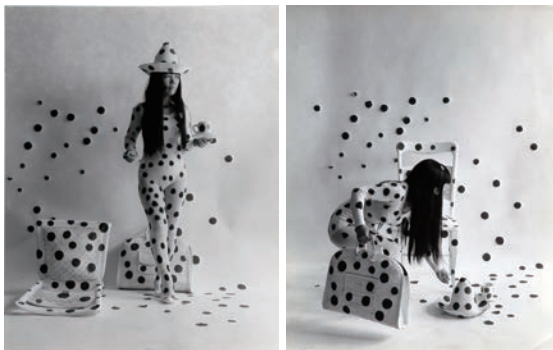
《Dots Obsession》(2015)

Look closely, can you see some interesting shapes? Polka dots have covered this room to the point where we cannot figure out what is actually inside the room.



She and her surroundings are covered in dots.
Just like the drawing she drew when she was 10 years old!

Performance



《Self-Obliteration by Dots》(1968)

In some of her performance art works, she used her body as a medium of expression. These pictures were taken during her performance, as a record. By sticking dots on the wall and her body, she unified the division between herself and her surroundings.

③ What does Kusama say about her Polka Dots?



Let's try and imagine the concept behind her artworks through the artist's own words.

"I wanted to examine the single dot that was my own life."

"Bring on Picasso, bring on Matisse, bring on anybody! I would stand up to them all with a single polka dot."

Infinity Net: The Autobiography of Yayoi Kusama

For Kusama, these polka dots may be a portrayal of herself. Her strong passion for the dots comes across through her works.

In this museum, you can enjoy many of her artworks. What do you think she felt when she was creating each of these pieces? Share your thoughts with the people around you!