

Why?

In the World of Polka Dots

Welcome to
Yayoi Kusama Museum!



You can see some polka dots at the entrance of the museum. Can you spot them…?

Japanese artist, Yayoi Kusama has created many artworks with polka dots.

Today, let's learn about her signature "polka dots"!

① 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 and wearing a kimono, a Japanese traditional garment. Is it possibly her mom?

You might have drawn your close ones before, like your family or friends, but don't you think there is 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 used to see 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.

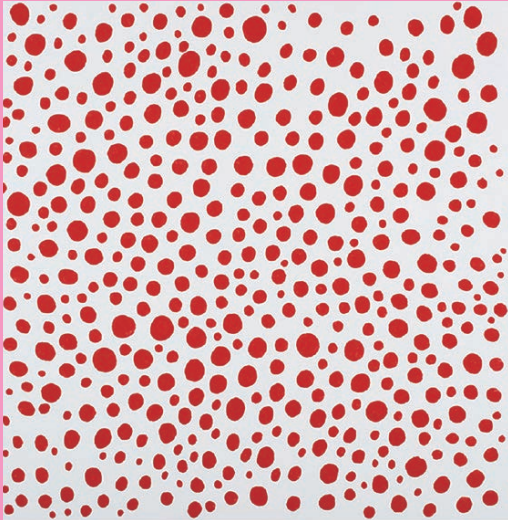
Instead of running away from the dots that seemed to be taking over her world, she began to make them into artworks.

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

Wow! You can see many different sizes of dots on this piece!



LIVING AT THE SKY'S END (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.

Sculpture

She creates artworks of pumpkins, too!



PUMPKIN (2015)

These polka dots are very colorful!

It is 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.

Installation

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



Dots Obsession (2015)

If you 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.

Performance

She and her surroundings are covered in dots.

Just like the drawing she drew when she was 10 years old!



Self-Obliteration by Dots (1968)



In her performance art places, 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?

Why not start a conversation with the people that visited the museum with you?