

EQUINOX GALLERY  
3642 Commercial Street  
Vancouver, BC V5N 4G2

604.736.2405 t  
info@equinoxgallery.com e  
www.equinoxgallery.com w

## Takao Tanabe

July 24th – August 28th, 2021  
Equinox Gallery, Vancouver

### Reception for the artist: **Saturday, August 14th**

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Equinox Gallery is delighted to present a new exhibition of works by Takao Tanabe, spanning the years 1957 – 2021. The works presented here have been selected from the artist's personal collection, many of which have never been previously shown.

The paintings in this exhibition can be viewed as plot points along Tanabe's seven decade-long relationship to the natural world, charting his travels and studies across Canada, to the United States, Europe, and back again, re-claiming British Columbia as his home in 1980 where he has since lived. Integral to these landscape paintings is a constant, uninterrupted horizon line, stretching from one edge of the canvas to the other, engulfing the viewer in a seemingly limitless expanse. These works are devoid of figures, allowing the subtle, often over-looked elements of the natural world to reassert themselves. As curator Ian Thom notes, "while it is true that these images edit the world, they do so to reveal its essence."

This exhibition also includes a selection of hard-edge paintings and banners of the late 1960s/early 1970s. In these works, Tanabe sought to complicate the shallow space of geometric abstraction he had learned studying in New York under Hans Hoffman in the 1950s, incorporating graduating colours and irregular angles. In 1970 Tanabe began designing and fabricating banners for large-scale public commissions, using dyed nylon to allow the natural light to pass through. Their sublime colours and patterns result in works which are both playful and monumental.

In addition to a decades-long career of teaching and mentorship, Tanabe has a long and generous history of supporting the arts and young artists in Canada. He has founded scholarship programs at Emily Carr University of Art + Design, University of Manitoba, University of British Columbia, and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. In 2018, he created an acquisition fund for the National Gallery of Canada - the Takao Tanabe Purchase Prize in Painting for Young Artists provides funds to acquire work by a young artist each year for ten years. He also founded the Takao Tanabe Prize, awarded to an emerging painter in British Columbia which is administered each year by the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.

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Tanabe was born in 1926 in Seal Cove near Prince Rupert and later moved to Vancouver as a teenager. During WWII, as a result of his Japanese heritage, Tanabe and his family were interned at Hastings Park and later, Lemon Creek in the Kootenays. Tanabe was able to leave two years later to Winnipeg and found work first as a labourer and then as a sign-painter, enrolling at the Winnipeg School of Art and studying under L.L. Fitzgerald. He went on to study at the Brooklyn Museum Art School, the Central School of Art in London and the Yanagida Taiun in Tokyo. In 1973, Tanabe became head of the painting division at the Banff School of Arts (now the Banff Centre) and is credited with transforming this institution over the next several years, bringing in new artist instructors and mentoring students. Over the last forty years Tanabe has continued to travel to cities and coasts all over the world, but has made his home on Vancouver Island.

In addition to over 70 solo exhibitions, Tanabe has received the Order of British Columbia (1993), the Order of Canada (1999), the Governor General's Visual and Media Arts Award (2003), and the Audain Prize for Lifetime Achievement in the Visual Arts (2013). Tanabe's work is included in many public and private collections, including the Tate Museum (UK), Cleveland Museum, Edmonton Art Gallery, Musee d'art contemporain de Montreal, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Art Gallery of Ontario, Glenbow Museum, and the National Gallery of Canada.

Takao Tanabe lives and works in Parksville, British Columbia.