

WIDEWALLS

Spirit World Biology: Val Kilmer and Hiro Ichikawa's Artistic Convergence

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New York's art scene welcomes an intriguing exhibition this fall, bringing together the works of Hollywood actor-turned-artist Val Kilmer and the late Japanese-American painter Hiro Ichikawa. Titled "Spirit World Biology", the show runs through first week of November 2024 in Woodward Gallery's exhibition space of the historical building of the Down Town Association social club in New York.

This unique pairing offers art enthusiasts a chance to explore two distinct artistic voices, each delving into the intersection of the natural world and human spirit through their individual styles. The exhibition promises a comprehensive look at both artists' work, showcasing their diverse approaches to abstract and nature-inspired art.

Val Kilmer: From Screen to Canvas

Val Kilmer, renowned for his prolific acting career spanning decades, has in recent years emerged as a formidable visual artist. Known for iconic roles in films such as "Top Gun", "The Doors", "Tombstone" and "Batman Forever", Kilmer has simultaneously channeled his creative energy into painting, producing a body of work as diverse and compelling as his on-screen performances.

Kilmer's contributions to "Spirit World Biology" illustrate his unique style of gestural abstractions. Often employing metal as his canvas instead of traditional wood, Kilmer's paintings invite viewers into expansive, infinite spaces. Gallery owner John Woodward

draws a parallel between Kilmer's work and the gravitational pull of a black hole, noting how the pieces beckon viewers to contemplate depth and meaning.

The actor-artist's creative process is described as instinctual, emerging from current emotions triggered by various external stimuli. His abstract series examines the illusion of matter, which he views as essentially energy. Kilmer's work often questions spirituality and existence.



Left to right: Hiro Ichikawa, "Glacous Cause", 2006, Val Kilmer, "Only One Mind", 2017, Hiro Ichikawa, "Overlay", 2012, Val Kilmer, "Untitled", 2017

Hiro Ichikawa: A Legacy of Serenity

The late Hiro Ichikawa's portion of the exhibition serves as a posthumous celebration of his artistic legacy. Born in Osaka, Japan, Ichikawa moved to the United States in 1980, eventually graduating from Pratt Institute with a BFA. His work, deeply influenced by both his Japanese heritage and his adopted American home, offers a unique perspective on nature and spirituality.

Ichikawa's oil paintings, created on birch panels, blend natural wood grain with colorful compositions. His technique involves applying clusters of tiny dots, creating luminescent scenes inspired by land, night skies, satellite imagery, and human migration patterns. John Woodward describes Ichikawa's work as reflecting "a serene fusion of delicate brushwork and vibrant earth tones."

The artist once explained his approach: "Literally translated, san-sui means mountain and water, but, in Japanese art, san-sui represents the creation of an imaginary landscape that doesn't exist in the physical realm." This philosophy is evident in Ichikawa's paintings, which capture the essence of nature rather than depicting literal landscapes.



Exhibition shot, Val Kilmer and Hiro Ichikawa, Down Town Association (NY), Woodward Gallery

A Transformative Experience

"Spirit World Biology" offers viewers more than just a visual experience; it presents an opportunity for introspection and exploration. The juxtaposition of Kilmer's bold, contemporary abstractions with Ichikawa's serene, nature-inspired pieces creates a dynamic dialogue between two distinct artistic voices.

The exhibition is accessible by appointment through Woodward Gallery at 60 Pine Street (NY) . For those unable to visit in person, the gallery offers online viewing options through [their website](#).

Having long worked with the Woodwards, Kilmer expressed his enthusiasm for the show on his website, stating, "I couldn't be happier with the look and feel of this show, and the gallery space is in a classic old-school downtown club." This excitement, coupled with the enduring legacy of Hiro Ichikawa's work, positions "Spirit World Biology" as a significant event in New York City's fall art calendar, offering a unique exploration of unseen dimensions through the eyes of two masterful artists.

Featured image: Exhibition shot. Val Kilmer and Hiro Ichikawa, Down Town Association (NY), Woodward Gallery. All images courtesy of the artists and Woodward Gallery