



**Smithsonian Institution**

*Archives of American Art*

## **Celebrating 175: Ray Yoshida, Biographical Summaries and Resumes, circa 1982-circa 1999**

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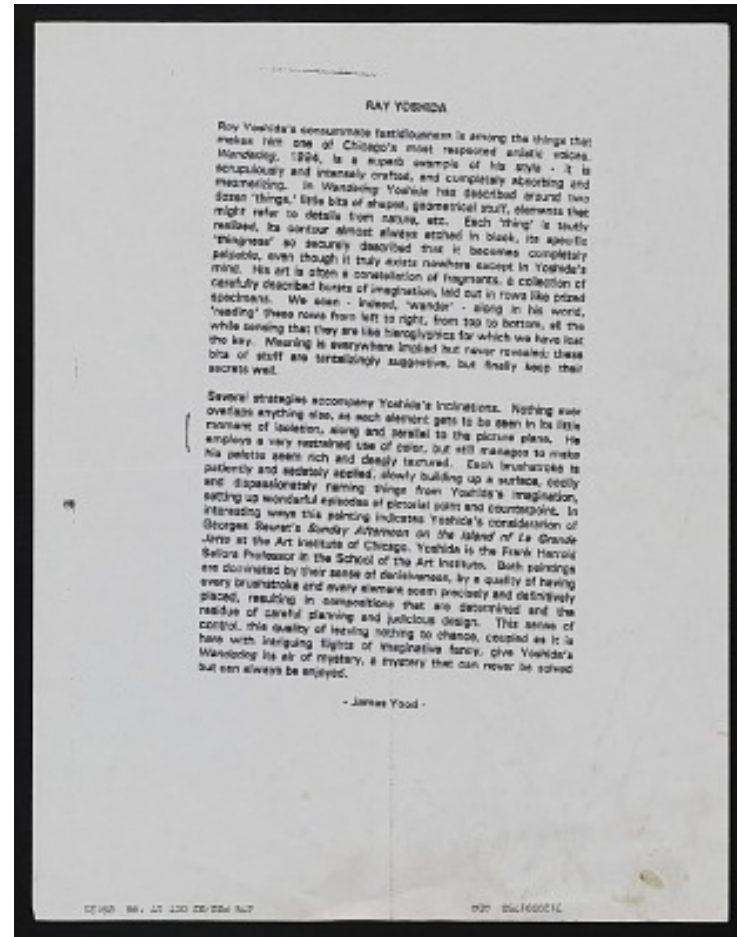
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Ray Yoshida

Ray Yoshida's consummate fastidiousness is among the things that makes him one of Chicago's most respected artistic voices. 'Wandering', 1994, is a superb example of his style - it is scrupulously and intensely crafted, and completely absorbing and mesmerizing. In 'Wandering' Yoshida has described around two dozen 'things,' little bits of shapes, geometrical stuff, elements that might refer to details from nature, etc. Each 'thing' is tautly realized, its contour almost always etched in black, its specific 'thingness' so securely described that it becomes completely palpable, even though it truly exists nowhere except in Yoshida's mind. His art is often a constellation of fragments, a collection of carefully described bursts of imagination, laid out in rows like prized specimens. We scan - indeed, 'wander' - along in his world, 'reading' these rows from left to right, from top to bottom, all the while sensing that they are like hieroglyphics for which we have lost the key. Meaning is everywhere implied but never revealed; these bits of stuff are tantalizingly suggestive, but finally keep their secrets well.

Several strategies accompany Yoshida's inclinations. Nothing ever overlaps anything else, as each element gets to be seen in its little moment of isolation, along and parallel to the picture plane. He employs a very restrained use of color, but still manages to make his palette seem rich and deeply textured. Each brushstroke is patiently and sedately applied, slowly building up a surface, coolly and dispassionately naming things from Yoshida's imagination, setting up wonderful episodes of pictorial point and counterpoint. In interesting ways this painting indicates Yoshida's consideration of Georges Seurat's Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte at the Art Institute of Chicago. Yoshida is the Frank Harold Sellors Professor in the School of the Art Institute. Both paintings are dominated by their sense of decisiveness, by a quality of having every brushstroke and every element seem precisely and definitively placed, resulting in compositions that are determined and the residue of careful planning and judicious design. This sense of control, this quality of leaving nothing to chance, coupled as it is here with intriguing flights of imaginative fancy, give Yoshida's Wandering its air of mystery, a mystery that can never be solved but can always be enjoyed.

-James Yood-



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