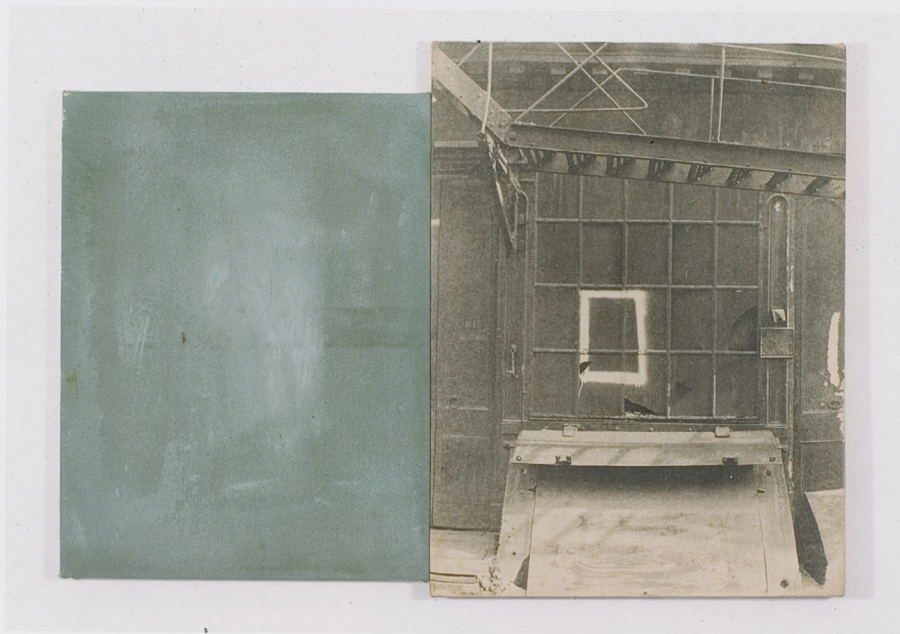


# Kunié Sugiura's *Market Front*



**New expressions often come from crossing mediums and technologies. . . . I can accept photography and painting as both real and abstract—completing one vision.**  
—Kunié Sugiura

Kunié Sugiura (active United States; born Nagoya, Japan, 1942), *Market Front*, 1978. Photographic emulsion and acrylic on canvas, 61 × 86.4 cm. Princeton University Art Museum. Museum purchase, Fowler McCormick, Class of 1921, Fund. © Kunié Sugiura

In *Market Front* artist Kunié Sugiura creates a diptych from stretched canvases, painting an abstract gestural color field on one panel and printing a photograph of the boarded-up facade of a market on the Lower East Side of Manhattan on the other. Sugiura began experimenting with photographic processes as a student at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in the late 1960s. Using darkroom chemicals and equipment to create pictures with distorted forms and otherworldly palettes, she was already working to expand the expressive possibilities for photography by defying the established rules of the medium when, following graduation, she arrived in New York City as a young artist. Sugiura was in good company; in the sixties New York-based artists from Robert Rauschenberg to Andy Warhol exploded the division between painting and photography by screenprinting photographs into expressive, painterly compositions. Sugiura's photographic canvases extend that conversation as well as those surrounding the development of abstract painting. She cites Ellsworth Kelly's color-field diptychs of this era as one inspiration. Indeed, the paired structures that Kelly used to explore color relationships

were for Sugiura an ideal format to present photography as parallel to painting—and to complicate ideas around abstraction versus representation attendant to each medium.

Beyond the artistic concerns in which Sugiura was enmeshed, this work is rooted in the specific context of 1970s Lower Manhattan, where the artist lived and worked. The photographic half of *Market Front* depicts an abandoned building near the historic Fulton Street fish market, an area intensely impacted by the economic depression affecting New York in that decade. Buildings were painted with either a square or a circle depending on whether they were slated to be repossessed or demolished. In pairing painting and photography, Sugiura blurs their expected associations with abstraction and representation. Here the frame of a photograph reveals the language of geometric abstraction inherent in the urban landscape just as a painted field might replicate the surface of the market front.

Mitra M. Abbaspour  
Haskell Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art