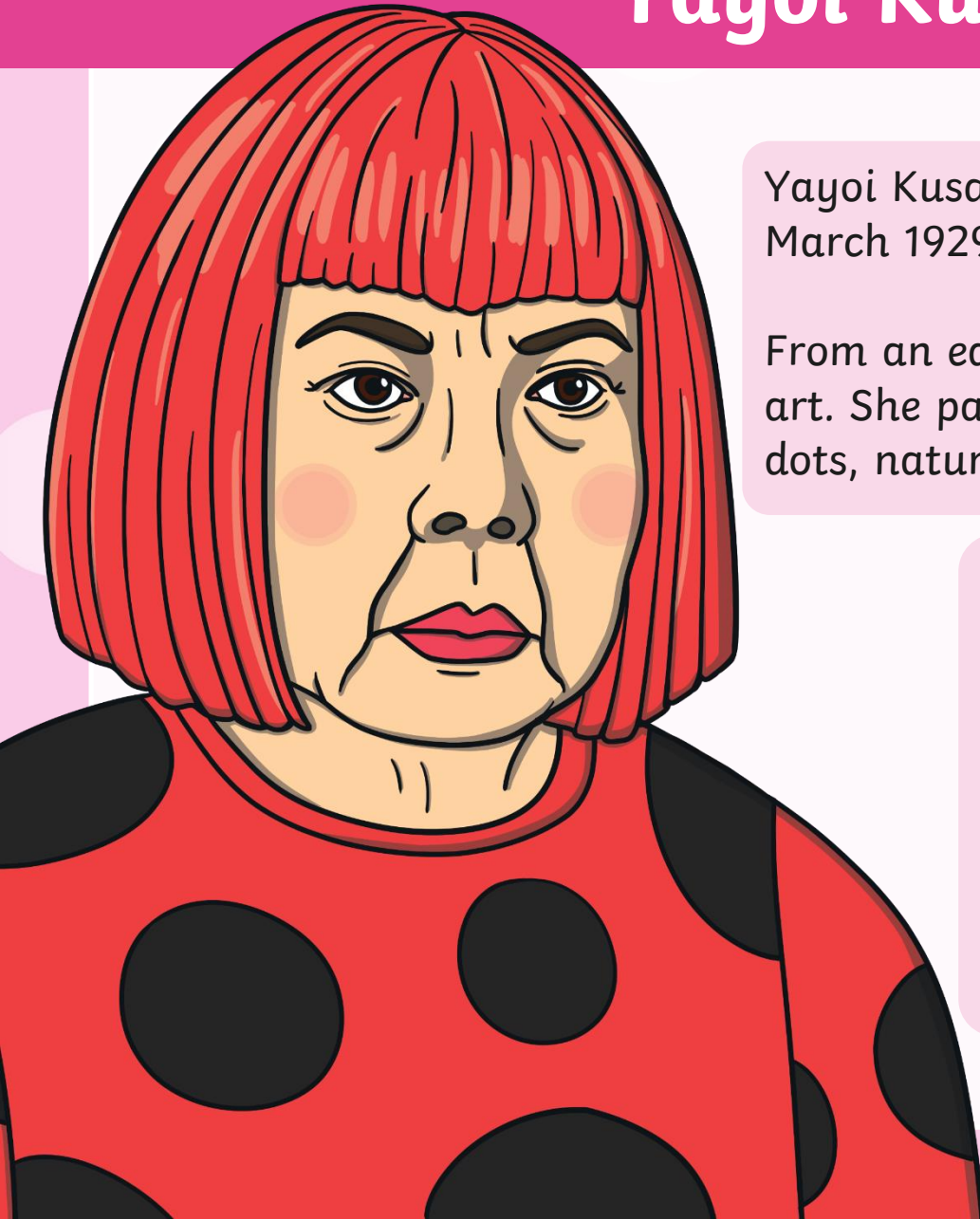


All About...

# Yayoi Kusama



# Yayoi Kusama



Yayoi Kusama was born in Japan on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1929. She was born into a rich family.

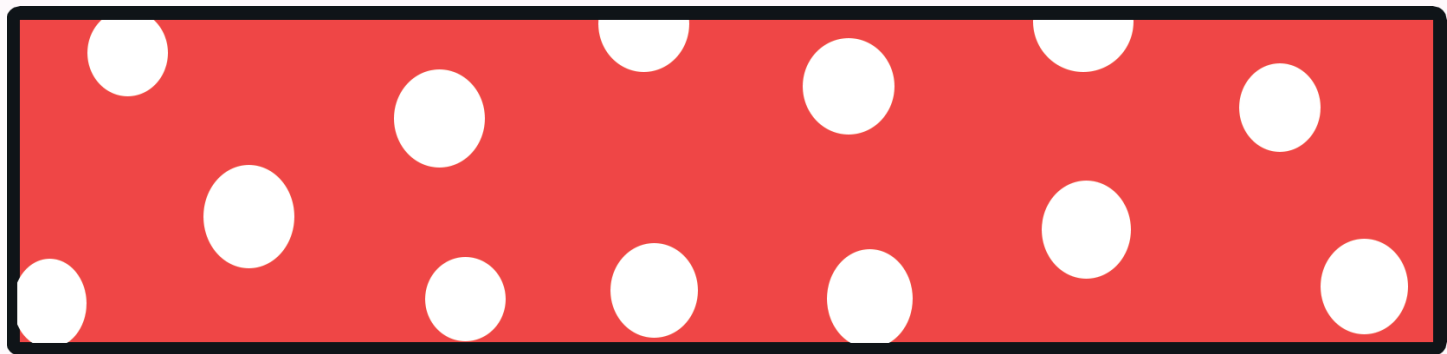
From an early age, Yayoi was interested in art. She particularly enjoyed exploring polka dots, nature and writing poetry.

Yayoi's family didn't want her to become an artist. Her mother would take away her drawings and try to stop her from doing any more. This was because Yayoi's family expected her to get married and have children, instead of getting a job.

# Visions

When Yayoi was ten years old, she started to experience strange visions (pictures in her head). She would later describe them as 'flashes of light, auras or dense fields of dots'. The visions sometimes included brightly-coloured flowers. These visions helped Yayoi start making art using polka dots.

It was around this time that the Second World War began. Yayoi says she will never forget the sound of bomber planes flying near her house and the air raid sirens ringing when the bombers were near. The darkness during air raids was very different to her bright visions.



# Starting to Be an Artist

Yayoi convinced her family to let her study at art college. In 1948, she went to the Kyoto City Specialist School of Arts.



Around this time, Yayoi began to further develop her interest in polka dots. She painted them on paper to begin with using different kinds of paints. Then, she began to paint them on walls, floors, household objects and even her assistant! Yayoi called these series of polka dots 'infinity nets'.



# America

Yayoi became interested in the art of an American artist, Georgia O'Keeffe. Georgia was well-known for painting pictures of giant flowers, tall buildings and landscapes. Yayoi wrote to Georgia about being an artist in America and was thrilled when Georgia replied, suggesting that Yayoi should move to America to show people her art. In 1957, Yayoi moved to America, living in Seattle first before settling in New York City.



# America

At first, Yayoi found it difficult moving to a different country and living in a big city, particularly when trying to compete in the male-dominated art world. She later said of all the new people she met, 'I would stand up to them with a single polka dot'.

Later, Georgia invited Yayoi to stay with her, as she was worried about Yayoi living in such a big city on her own.

## Talk About It

Imagine you were moving to a big city, in a new country where you didn't know anyone. How would you feel?



# America

In 1959, Yayoi had her first art exhibition. An art exhibition is when an artist's work is displayed for people to come and look at. Sometimes, they may even buy the art. After her first exhibition, Yayoi began to become quite famous. She also got to know other famous artists, such as Andy Warhol and Eva Hesse.



# Pumpkins

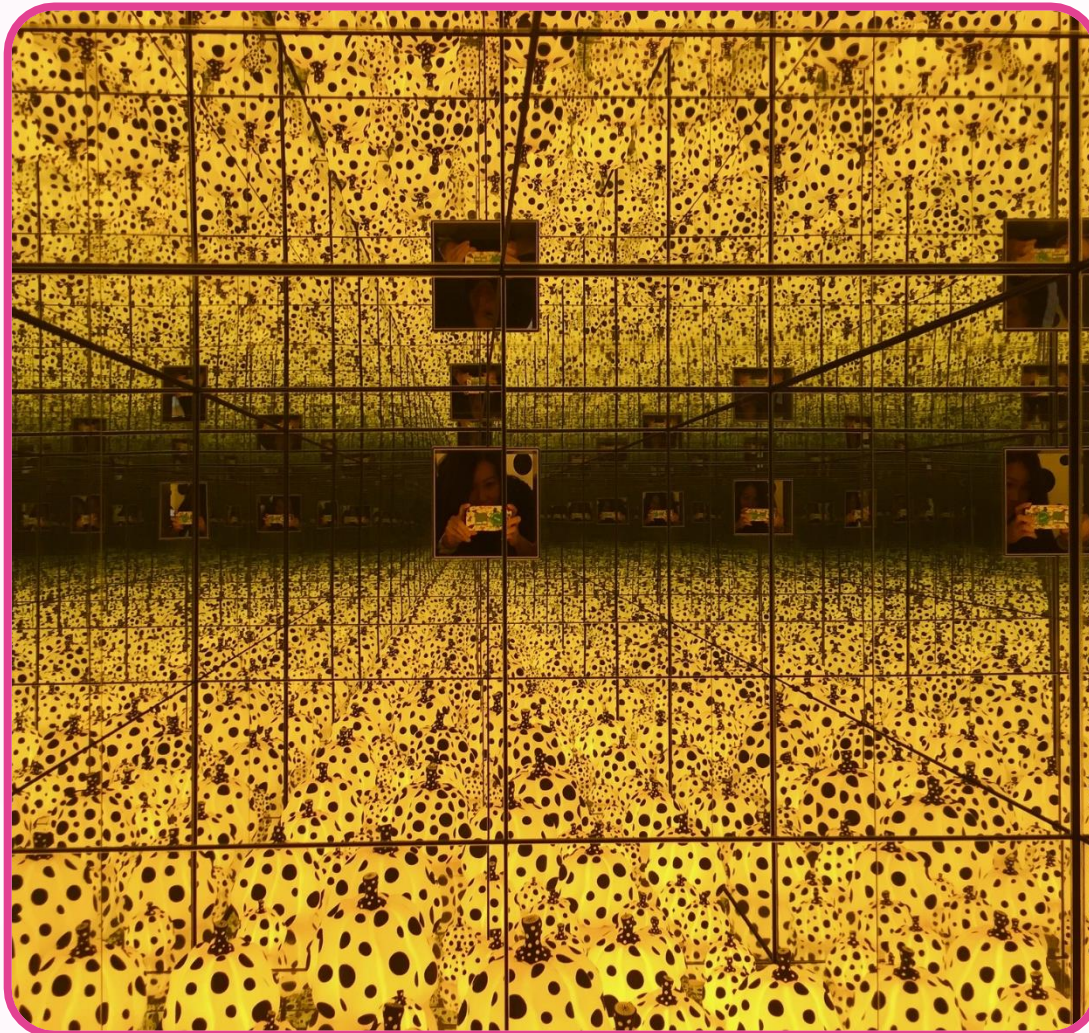
When she was growing up, Yayoi's family grew pumpkins at their plant nursery. As a child, she drew pumpkins and continued this when she was an adult.

Yayoi has made pumpkin art on paper, as sculptures and also as infinity nets.





# Infinity Rooms



Yayoi has created many pieces of art which she calls 'infinity rooms'. These are rooms where the walls are lined with mirrors. She places sculptures at different heights within the rooms. People can then enter the room and stand on small platforms. The mirrors give the impression that the room never ends and the art keeps going.

# Performance Art

Performance art is when an artist uses their own body to combine visual art with dramatic movement or actions.

Yayoi Kusama has made lots of performance art. In 1966, she created 'Walking Piece'. She wore a traditional Japanese kimono and carried a parasol while walking through the streets of New York.



# Other Work



Yayoi has also designed clothes, handbags and mobile phones, as well as make-up and jewellery for famous fashion designers.

Continuing her love of poetry from when she was a child, Yayoi has written books of poetry.

In 2003, she wrote a book about her life called 'Infinity Net'.

# Try It!

Why not try creating your own polka-dot art? You could use crayons, felt tips or paint. You could draw your polka dots on paper or maybe even an object - make sure you ask a grown up's permission first! You could use mirrors to make your art look like it never ends.

