

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ethnography of the Body and Material
— *Slowness and Depth in an Accelerated Society*
Ten Japanese Artists on Slowness and the Act of Making

**ETHNOGRAPHY
OF THE BODY
AND
MATERIAL**



**SLOWNESS
AND
DEPTH IN AN
ACCELERATED
SOCIETY**

CURATED BY YUJI AKIMOTO WITH SHIGE FUJISHIRO, KAZUHITO KAWAI,
TAKAHIRO KOMURO, TAKURO KUWATA, RITSUE MISHIMA, YOCA MUTA,
MAYU NAKATA, JUNKO OKI, NORITAKA TATEHANA, YUI WATA



Visual Identity of *Ethnography of the Body and Material — Slowness and Depth in an Accelerated Society*.
Takahiro Komuro, *Dog dragon*, 2023 Photo: Takashi Ito (ito-kobo inc.) | Design: bruno

Venice, Italy — NPO Syuto Kanazawa presents ***Ethnography of the Body and Material — Slowness and Depth in an Accelerated Society***, a major exhibition that brings together ten Japanese artists with material-driven, craft-based approaches. On view from May 9 to November 22, 2026 at Palazzo Pisani Santa Marina, concurrent to the 61st International Art Exhibition — La Biennale di Venezia, the exhibition is curated by **Yuji Akimoto**, former artistic director of Benesse Art Site Naoshima and artistic director of **Go for Kogei**, a project dedicated to promoting new perspectives on craft from Hokuriku, a region with a long history of craftsmanship.

Rather than positioning craft as a discrete genre, the exhibition deliberately adopts a craft-based approach as a critical lens through which contemporary art itself can be reread and reinterpreted. The exhibition presents a renewed understanding of contemporary art grounded in deep engagement with materiality, embodied forms of knowledge, and the gradual accumulation of gestures over time. Through the artists' diverse practices, the exhibition offers a quiet yet resolute inquiry into dominant value systems that prioritize speed, visibility, and immediate circulation.

Ethnography of the Body and Material — Slowness and Depth in an Accelerated Society examines how the act of “making” can restore a different sense of time and physical perception within an increasingly accelerated society. Working with materials including clay, glass, fiber, lacquer, earth, water, fire, and the body itself, the ten featured artists foreground slowness, repetition, and manual labor as essential modes of knowledge and experience.

In this exhibition, “ethnography” refers to a fieldwork-based approach that interprets the entire practice within its cultural context, including examining how artists use their hands, how materials transform their production environment, as well as the viewers' senses. The exhibition approaches each work as a form of “sensory fieldwork” situated between the body and the material, process and perception. These works emerge through sustained attention and tactile awareness, encouraging viewers to spend time with subtle transformations, layered surfaces, and accumulated gestures.

Ethnography of the Body and Material centers ways of working that unfold over extended durations and resist the demand for immediacy. Each participating artist engages with materials that impose their own temporal logic. Clay must dry and crack. Lacquer demands repeated application and long periods of curing. Glass cools at its own pace. Thread responds to tension, gravity, and accumulated touch. In yielding to these rhythms, the artists produce works that embody layered time rather than fixed images.

Curator **Yuji Akimoto** says: “*The world we live in is marked by a focus on immediacy and efficiency. It prizes ‘easy-to-understand’ and ‘ready-to-use’ qualities, while increasingly neglecting the ‘slow pace’ and ‘silence’ that nurture the depth of our senses and memories. Ethnography of the Body and Material considers the creation and appreciation process itself as a form of quiet resistance to challenge an accelerated society. It is an effort to reconstruct our senses and reconnect with the world. This micro-ethnography, woven at the intersection of body and material, excavates forgotten strata of sensitivity and reveals new meanings of ‘making’ in the modern age.*”

Set within the historic **Palazzo Pisani Santa Marina**, the exhibition engages directly with the building's layered architectural history, characterized by high ceilings, thick walls, shifting

natural light, and surfaces marked by centuries of use and restoration. Rather than transforming the palazzo into a neutral display environment, the exhibition embraces its accumulated “time of architecture” as an integral element of the viewing experience. Led by architect **Kulapat Yantrasast of WHY Architecture**, the exhibition design introduces a temporary scaffolding structure that encourages visitors to move through the space from multiple perspectives. This three-dimensional pathway dissolves linear viewing routes and modes of viewing, reconfiguring the relationships between architecture, artwork, and the body, redefining space as an apparatus for experiencing time.

Several artists foreground contingency and transformation as central to their practice. **Takuro Kuwata** exposes ceramics to unpredictable reactions between clay, glaze, and kiln, allowing chance to shape the final form. By exhibiting the unfinished process of creation, his work reveals the ongoing temporal flow to the viewers. **Kazuhito Kawai**, sculpts the traces of the body through repeated interactions between clay and gravity, visually capturing the gradual transformation of clay as it dries and cracks over the course of the exhibition.

Time is also embedded through repetition and manual labor. **Junko Oki** stitches directly onto antique fabrics (called *boro*) without underdrawings, entangling the histories of worn textiles with newly added threads. Her works accumulate meaning through countless gestures and cycles of washing and reworking. Similarly, **Yui Wata** constructs large-scale woven sculptures by manually plying threads and dyeing them with earth pigments, pursuing primal beauty that transcends time and culture.

Other artists slow perception itself. **Ritsue Mishima** collaborates closely with Murano glass artisans, guiding molten glass through improvisation rather than predetermined form. Her transparent sculptures capture layers of light and time, requiring viewers to move slowly around them to perceive subtle shifts in reflection and refraction. **Mayu Nakata** applies more than forty layers of lacquer (or *urushi*) over months of labor, producing surfaces that reveal different expressions depending on the viewer’s position, suggesting memory as fluid and ever-changing rather than fixed.

Shige Fujishiro and **Takahiro Komuro** approach slowness through accumulation and deceleration. Fujishiro embeds time through the repetitive hand-threading of thousands of glass beads, creating a new paradise within our familiar everyday scene. Komuro slows the visual language of urban culture by translating pop and kitschy 3DCG imagery into hand-carved wooden sculptures, revealing the devotion and duration concealed behind forms associated with speed and mass production.

Slowness also emerges through layered process and ritual in the practices of **Yoca Muta** and **Noritaka Tatehana**. For Muta, who pursues a unique style of expression based on Japanese traditional ceramic painting, the quiet stillness during the drying process is integrated as part of

the experience of appreciating the artwork. Tatehana explores contemporary values through traditional Japanese culture and craftsmanship. His signature work, Heel-less Shoes, popularized as a global fashion icon by Lady Gaga, was inspired by the elevated wooden clogs worn by oiran (elite courtesans) during the Edo period.

Ethnography of the Body and Material becomes a place for reflexive ethnography, embracing the cycle of the artist as observer, the artwork as field notes, and the viewer as a fellow investigator. The result is an accumulated database of physical sensations, oscillating between creation and appreciation, proposing slowness and depth as critical tools for rethinking how we create, perceive, and live within an accelerated world.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Exhibition Title

Ethnography of the Body and Material — Slowness and Depth in an Accelerated Society

Opening Dates & Hours

May 9–November 22, 2026 (Closed Tuesdays)

May 9–September 30: 11:00 AM–7:00 PM

October 1–November 22: 10:00 AM–6:00 PM

Venue

Palazzo Pisani Santa Marina (Cannaregio 6104, 30121 Venice, Italy)

Preview

May 6–8, 2026, 11:00 AM–7:00 PM

Opening Reception

May 7, 2026, 5:00–7:00 PM

Participating Artists (in alphabetical order)

Shige Fujishiro; Kazuhito Kawai; Takahiro Komuro; Takuro Kuwata; Ritsue Mishima; Yoca Muta; Mayu Nakata; Junko Oki; Noritaka Tatehana; Yui Wata

About Yuji Akimoto

Akimoto is an art critic, professor emeritus at Tokyo University of the Arts, special director of the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, and a distinguished professor at Tainan National University of the Arts. Born in 1955 in Tokyo, he holds a BA in fine art from the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music (now Tokyo University of the Arts). Akimoto first became involved in the art projects at Benesse Art Site Naoshima in 1991, and later served

as artistic director of Benesse Art Site Naoshima and director of the Chichu Art Museum (2004–2006). After serving as director of the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa (2007–2017), he taught as a professor at Tokyo University of the Arts while serving as director of the University Art Museum (2015–2021). From 2017 through 2023, he served as director of the Nerima Art Museum, and he is currently the artistic director of Go for Kogei. His past projects and exhibitions include *The Standard* (Naoshima, 2001); *Naoshima Standard 2* (Naoshima, 2006–2007); the first three iterations of the *International Triennale of Kogei in Kanazawa* (Kanazawa and Caotun, Taiwan; 2010–2017); *Art Crafting Towards the Future* (Kanazawa, 2012); *Japanese Kogei: Future Forward* (New York, 2015); *Yu-ichi Inoue 1916–1985—La calligraphie libérée at Japonismes 2018* (Paris and Albi, France); and *Art as It Is: Expressions from the Obscure* (Tokyo, 2020). His publications include *Art thinking* (Aato shiko, Tokyo: PRESIDENT Inc., 2019).

About NPO Syuto Kanazawa

NPO Syuto Kanazawa is a citizen-led non-profit organization established in 2007, focused on community development in Kanazawa and its neighboring regions, drawing on its rich cultural heritage. In 2020, the organization launched Go for Kogei, a project dedicated to promoting new perspectives on craft, an important historical and cultural resource of the region. By organizing a wide range of cultural initiatives, the organization aims to strengthen regional and international collaboration while fostering new dialogues and enriching cultural value from a contemporary perspective.

About Go for Kogei

Go for Kogei is a project dedicated to promoting new perspectives on craft from Hokuriku, a region with a long history of craftsmanship. Since its inception in 2020, hosted by NPO Syuto Kanazawa, a citizen-led non-profit organization promoting community development in Kanazawa through its rich cultural heritage, the project has presented exhibitions and events at shrines, temples, and other sites that reflect the region's history and climate. It has also organized conferences to enrich the discourse on today's issues and possibilities surrounding craft. Since 2024, the project has broadened its scope internationally, launching with an exhibition in Paris and subsequently presenting its activities in cities including Seoul, London, and Tainan.

For more information, please visit <https://venice.goforkogei.com>. Follow us on Instagram at [@goforkogei](https://www.instagram.com/goforkogei).

Press Inquiries

Grace MacDonald / FITZ & CO / gmacdonald@fitzandco.com / +1 650 823 7333

Yoshiko Nawa (Relay Relay LLP) / Go for Kogei / pr-global@goforkogei.com / +81 76 223 3580