

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*

### Venue

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

### Opening Dates & Hours

Preview: May 6–8, 2026, 11:00 AM–7:00 PM

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

### Press Preview

May 5, 2026, 4:00 PM–6:00 PM

*Drinks and light bites will be served. RSVP essential.*

### 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**

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## Go for Kogei – Artist Biographies

### ***Ethnography of the Body and Material – Slowness and Depth in an Accelerated Society***

9 May – 22 November, 2026

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

#### **Shige Fujishiro**



Born in Hiroshima Prefecture in 1976, Fujishiro received a doctoral degree in Fine Arts from Hiroshima City University in 2005. He has remained based in Hanover since participating in an exchange program at Hochschule Hannover - University of Applied Sciences and Arts. His work consists of glass beads, which have long been treasured as accessories and ancient commodities, and safety pins. His motifs include natural objects, such as flowers and animals, and other everyday objects, such as playground equipment and shopping bags. Through his painstaking and time-consuming process of manually

threading tens of thousands of beads, he creates a new paradise within our familiar everyday scene. His representative work, *Where is my Paradise?* reflects his questioning of his own circumstances: being a studio-bound artist due to his creative process and the limitations of his non-native language—with his Japanese heritage. His resplendent work turns this inseparable life-labor-artwork link into questions for modern consumer society and materialism, which are posed to people who enjoy the freedom he could only glimpse through the window. Nevertheless, he intentionally avoids excessive criticism. This ambiguity is perhaps what constitutes Fujishiro's paradise, inspiring multiple interpretations.

His recent major exhibitions include the solo exhibition *Where is my Paradise?* (SIC! Gallery, Poland, 2016) and *No Strings* (National Glass Center Sunderland, UK, 2020). Major awards include the Silver Prize at the Toyama International Glass Exhibition 2021 (2021), the Jutta Cuny-Franz Award (2011), and the Coburg Prize for Contemporary Glass (2014). His work is included in the collections of the Museum Kunstpalast, the Museum August Kestner, and the National Glass Center (Sunderland, UK).

Shige Fujishiro

*Where is my paradise? (Basketballgoal / waterfall)*, 2015.

Portrait by Kai Flemming



## Kazuhiro Kawai



Born in Ibaraki Prefecture in 1984, Kawai received a Bachelor of Arts degree with honors in Fine Arts from Chelsea College of Art and Design in 2007. In 2018, he graduated from Kasama College of Ceramic Art in Ibaraki Prefecture. Following a hiatus from artistic production after returning from London, he began exploring creative expression through ceramics, prompted by an encounter with the medium in his hometown of Kasama. Stepping away from the conventional approach of pursuing materials and styles, he sees clay as a medium for projecting fiction, contradiction, and desire. The result is an excessive yet fragile form that intertwines his identity and the cultural residues behind it.

Kawai's artistic expression cannot be discussed without considering the Shibuya and Harajuku culture of the late 1990s and early 2000s, which he admired as a teenager and is often incorporated into his installation works. However, the views conveyed by magazines, TV, and other mass media invariably contain a gap with reality. His work captures this gap within a chaotic mass coated with glazes of extreme colors reminiscent of bodily fluids. It presents layers of candy-like sweetness and an awkward feel as if entering forbidden territory.

His major exhibitions include the solo show *Precious Time* (Kotaro Nukaga, Tokyo, 2025) and the group exhibition *Foolish Fire* (Newchild Gallery, Belgium, 2023). Other exhibitions include The Armory Show 2024 (New York, USA, 2024) and Frieze Los Angeles (Los Angeles, USA, 2020). His works are part of the collections at the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Loewe Collection.



Kazuhiro Kawai, *Sunflowers*, 2025. ©Kazuhiro Kawai [on exhibit]  
Portrait by cocoro

## Takahiro Komuro



Born in Tokyo in 1985, Komuro earned his Master of Fine Arts in Sculpture from the Tokyo University of the Arts in 2011. Drawing inspiration from his childhood favorites, including American comics, action figures, and science fiction films from the 1980s and 1990s, he creates wood sculptures integrating the unique texture and design of soft vinyl toys. His sculptural language was developed through his work producing small-lot soft vinyl figures in the U.S., which began as a commission from an LA-based company. His artistic expression currently revolves around wooden sculptures that mimic these industrial products, along with

mass-produced soft vinyl figures.

All of his works feature highly flexible designs made possible through meticulous 3DCG simulations, free from physical limitations. Despite their pop and kitschy appearance, Komuro sees sculpting itself as a sacred practice. When a plaything (the Japanese term for “toy” is written as an “item to play with”) is presented at a larger-than-life scale, it evokes a supernatural power that resembles Buddhist statues or figures from Greek mythology. Komuro’s sculptures seamlessly bridge the gap between idols of worship and icons of consumer society, capturing the essence of his work.

His major solo exhibitions include *Vortex* (Ginza Tsutaya Books Ginza Atrium, Tokyo, 2019) and *Phantom Cave* (StolenSpace Gallery, London, 2023). Major group exhibitions include *Go for Kogei 2023* (Masuda Shuzo Masuizumi, Toyama Prefecture, 2023) and *Juxtapoz Clubhouse* (Superchief Gallery, USA, 2018). He released bronze sculptures titled *Sphinx - Kira* (2023) and *Ground Dragon* (2022) in collaboration with Avant Arte.



Takahiro Komuro, *Bat dragon*, 2023.  
Photo: Takashi Ito (ito-kobo inc.) [on exhibit]  
Portrait by Federico Radaelli

## Takuro Kuwata



Born in Hiroshima Prefecture in 1981, Kuwata graduated from the Kyoto Saga University of Arts Junior College (now Kyoto Saga University of Arts) in 2001, and from Tajimi City Pottery Design and Technical Center in 2007. He pursues artistic expression outside the conventional framework of ceramic art. His unique visual language combines pop colors and a colorful palette with excessive application of traditional ceramic techniques such as *kairagi* (a textured surface that resembles the granular texture of shark skin caused by glaze shrinkage), *ishihaze* (lit. “stone bursts,” referring to the irregularities or cracks on a ceramic surface

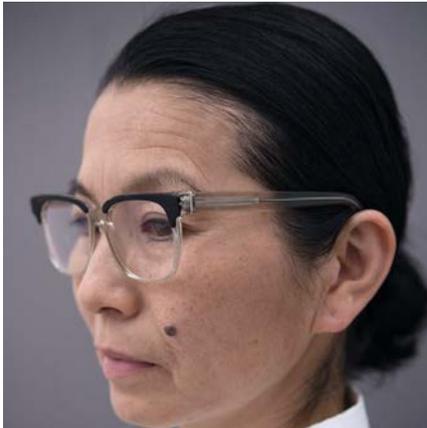
caused by the expansion of small stones in the clay during firing), and *tenteki* (application of glaze in a dotted pattern). At the same time, his practice seamlessly incorporates Japanese traditions, such as tea culture, as evident in the title of his large-scale sculptural work, *Chawan* (Tea Bowl). In recent years, his focus has included producing interior décor by extending the elements within his studio, as well as returning to the origins of ceramics—the concept of “food.” His newly launched Ku craft collection integrates mass-production techniques fostered in Tajimi, a city in Gifu Prefecture known as Japan’s ceramic capital. His work spans from vessels for everyday use to extraordinary sculptural pieces. Oscillating between these extremes, he brings new perspectives and creativity to each realm.

His major solo exhibitions include *Together Shiyoze! (Let’s Get Together!)* (Salon 94, USA, 2025), *Kamaage Udon* (Gallery & Restaurant Butaiura, Tokyo, 2025), and *Strange Clay: Ceramics in Contemporary Art* (Hayward Gallery, UK, 2022-2023). Significant awards include the Loewe Craft Prize Special Mention (2018) and the 2021 Japan Ceramic Society Award (2022). His work is housed in public collections worldwide, including the Rubell Family Collection, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Palm Springs Art Museum, and the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa.



Takuro Kuwata, *Cup*, 2025.  
Photo: Shimpei Suzuki [on exhibit]

## Ritsue Mishima



Mishima was born in Kyoto Prefecture in 1962. She moved to Venice in 1989, where she began working with glass in 1996. In 2011, she established a residence in Kyoto, and is now based in two locations.

Throughout her three-decade artistic journey, she has consistently worked with glass artisans on Murano Island. She acts as a conductor, closely observing the state of the glass and guiding the artisans by communicating her vision through improvisation. As she describes her work as the “fruit of the fire”—a creation born from the fusion of material and craftsmanship in blazing flames—its organic forms are filled with vitality. These pieces are spontaneous, inevitable outcomes of the production process rather than something consciously fabricated for their form.

Mishima, as an explorer of light, is uncompromising about the use of colorless, highly transparent glass. Its “reservoir of light” generates subtle refractions, reflections, transmissions, and shadows, which allow a sculpture to blend into its surroundings, morphing into a device that captures the surrounding light. Each piece shines as a standalone work, yet together in the exhibition space, they begin to create a polyphony.

Her recent major solo exhibitions include *Ritsue Mishima - Glass Works* (Gallerie dell'Accademia, Italy, 2022) and *In Grimani* (Museo di Palazzo Grimani, Italy, 2013). Major group exhibitions include *Wonderment Noe Aoki / Ritsue Mishima* (Tokyo Metropolitan Teien Art Museum, 2024) and the 53rd Venice Biennale (Venice Pavilion, 2009). Her work is included in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris and Museum JAN, among others.



Ritsue Mishima. Installation view from *Wonderment Noe Aoki / Ritsue Mishima*, Tokyo Metropolitan Teien Art Museum, 2024. Photo: Yasushi Ichikawa  
Portrait by Noelle Hoeppe

## Yoca Muta



Born in Tokyo in 1981, Muta graduated from Goldsmiths, University of London, with a BA in Fine Arts in 2008, and from Ishikawa Prefectural Kutani Ware Technical Training Institute in 2012. She pursues a unique style of expression based on the ceramic painting technique she learned from the traditional Kutani ware in the Kaga region of Ishikawa Prefecture. For Muta, painting means depicting a scene through the accumulation of production processes, from shaping the clay to underdrawings, glazing, and overglaze painting. Although shaping clay is regarded as the “background” realm, she seeks to incorporate the tactile

qualities achieved through hand-building into the “image” to create a unified beauty with integrity. Her artistic expression embraces the evolution of the “view of nature,” based on her in-depth study of existing ceramic painting designs. Rather than viewing the designs as mere depictions of nature, she focuses on the emotions toward nature that are captured by the craftspeople of their time, such as admiration, desire, reverence, and fear. Like an icon of such an imperfect human mind, Muta’s color paintings emerge as a harmonious blend of reality and illusion, real existence and fiction, motion and stillness.

Her major exhibitions include the solo show *The Eyes of Vessels* (Ginza Tsutaya Books Ginza Atrium, Tokyo, 2021), as well as the Cheongju Craft Biennale (Cheongju, South Korea, 2023) and Go for Kogei 2021 (Otaki-Okamoto Shrines, Fukui Prefecture, 2021). Major awards include the Grand Prize at the 11th Paramita Museum Ceramic Art Grand Prize Exhibition (2016). Her work is housed at the National Crafts Museum, Paramita Museum, and the Kutani Porcelain Art Museum. She is the author of *Yoca Muta: The Aesthetic Ceramic Vessels* (Geijutsu Shinbunsha, 2020).

Yoca Muta, *Sometime Somewhere One through One*, 2025.  
Installation view from *Skin and Viscera: Self, World, and Time*, Tainan Art Museum, 2025.



## Mayu Nakata



Born in Hokkaido in 1982, Nakata studied lacquerware at the Kagawa Urushi Lacquerware Institute and graduated from the Kanazawa Utatsuyama Crafts Workshop in 2021. Nakata is an *urushi* (lacquer) artist who has uniquely developed the *Kinma* technique. This decorative lacquer art technique involves engraving a design on a multi-layered middle coating, which is later filled with colored lacquer. In Nakata's approach, approximately forty layers of colored lacquer are applied to a total thickness of just 0.5 mm, and the surface is then polished to achieve a vibrant, organic pattern. The scale of her work is also noteworthy. The

greatest allure of her work lies in the harmonious coexistence of dynamic forms and the elaborate techniques hidden within.

Her creations are inspired by “memories” of her real-life experiences. Scenes that captivate her (e.g., lightning, a cloud, or a flying bird) are depicted with layered colors. Since her production process takes a minimum of four months to sometimes a year, daily changes have a direct impact on the work. Consequently, even the pivotal memory itself settles with some “fluctuation.” Her work presents different expressions depending on the viewer's perspective, as if indicating that memory is not self-evident and definitive, but rather an ever-changing phenomenon itself.

Her recent major exhibitions include the solo show *The Skies Above – The Lacquer of Mayu Nakata* (A Lighthouse called Kanata, Tokyo, 2024), as well as the group exhibitions *The Secrets of Color: from Impressionism to Contemporary Art* (Pola Museum of Art, Kanagawa Prefecture, 2024) and *Imaginal Crafts* (National Crafts Museum, Ishikawa Prefecture, 2024). She was a finalist for the Loewe Foundation Craft Prize (2019). Her work is in the collections of the National Crafts Museum and the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, among others.



Mayu Nakata, *Thunderclouds*, 2021.

Photo: Tomoya Nomura [on exhibit]

Portrait by Yu Kadowaki

## Junko Oki



Born in Saitama Prefecture in 1963, Oki graduated from the Setsu Mode Seminar in 1991. Inspired by her late mother's sewing tools, she began teaching herself embroidery in 2002. She has developed her creative activities while embracing the idea of stitching as a way to engrave the traces of life on fabric.

Her embroidery style is characterized by direct stitching onto the fabric without underdrawings. It resonates with her approach toward patched antique fabrics (called *boro*). Her unique designs, crafted with this simple technique, casually cast aside the preconceived notion of embroidery. The time and stories behind antique fabrics and tools are intertwined with Oki's own, breathing a new life imbued with contingency. Her creation process also involves hand-washing the embroidered fabric to entangle the fibers of the antique fabric with the newly applied embroidery. This allows the dyes to bleed into each other, mingling the memories and time within them. Through this layered manual approach, she attempts to embody the aesthetics nurtured in plain lifestyles from premodern times through contemporary expression.

Her major solo exhibitions include the *11th Shiseido Art Egg* (Shiseido Gallery, Tokyo, 2017), *Anthology* (Hagi Uragami Museum, Yamaguchi Prefecture, 2020), and *Junko Oki: The Exposed* (The Museum of Modern Art Kamakura Annex, Kanagawa Prefecture, 2022). Her major group exhibitions include *Go for Kogei 2021* (Natadera Temple, Ishikawa Prefecture, 2021) and *Imaginal Crafts* (National Crafts Museum, Ishikawa Prefecture, 2024). In 2014, the art book *PUNK* (Bungeishunju) was published, featuring her work that she photographed herself. Her work is housed in public collections including the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, and the Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura & Hayama.



Junko Oki, *time machine*, 2017.

Photo: Keizo Kioku © Junko Oki, Courtesy of KOSAKU KANECHIKA [on exhibit]

## Noritaka Tatehana



Born in Tokyo in 1985, Tatehana graduated from the Tokyo University of the Arts in 2010, majoring in textile art. As a contemporary artist, he explores contemporary values through traditional Japanese culture and craftsmanship, guided by his creative philosophy “Rethink.” This philosophy involves a pursuit of artistic expressions of Japanese traditions and culture with contemporary interpretations, instead of simply reproducing them in contemporary contexts. His signature work, *Heel-less Shoes*, was inspired by the elevated wooden clogs worn by *oiran* (elite courtesans) in the Edo period. The piece has become a globally iconic fashion item after being popularized by the American singer Lady Gaga. Tatehana has also actively collaborated with numerous traditional craftspeople (e.g., *Edo kiriko* glass, *kinkarakawashi* paper, and *kumihimo* braiding). Furthermore, the two signature motifs of Tatehana—lightning bolts and clouds—symbolize Japan’s religious landscape or its evolution that embraces the syncretism of Shintoism and Buddhism. These motifs serve as an essential language for him, as he seeks to transcend binary oppositions, such as heaven and earth, and life and death.

His major exhibitions include *Future Beauty: 30 Years of Japanese Fashion* (The Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Tokyo, 2012), *Noritaka Tatehana: Aesthetics of Magic* (Taro Okamoto Memorial Museum, Tokyo, 2016), *Items: Is Fashion Modern?* (The Museum of Modern Art, New York City, USA, 2017), traveling exhibition *Contemporary Japanese Crafts* (Panasonic Shiodome Museum of Art, Tokyo, 2020), and *Edo Tokyo Rethink* (Kyu-Iwasaki-tei Garden, Tokyo, 2024). His works are in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the Victoria and Albert Museum, among others.

Noritaka Tatehana, *Floating World*, 2024.

Photo: Osamu Sakamoto ©NORITAKA TATEHANA K.K.

Courtesy of KOSAKU KANECHIKA

Portrait by GION



## Yui Wata



Born in Shizuoka Prefecture in 2000, Wata earned a master's degree in craft at Kanazawa College of Art in 2025. All fabrics are created through the repetitive patterns of weaving, yet Wata finds her creative playground in the narrow spaces between threads. Even seemingly flat fabrics have a semi-three-dimensional structure formed by intertwined threads, and she explores this by creating sculptural works that rise taller than herself. Her creative process always begins with manually plying threads. She also undertakes the labor-intensive process of dyeing threads with earth. For Wata, who says, "I just spontaneously sought a primitive process of creation," these choices were an inevitable fate. Although she considers her sculptural approach—which uses the weight of the fabric itself—as primitive, it echoes her artistry of emphasizing materials and techniques, such as shifting qualities of plying and weaving from the top to the bottom. Through this process, Wata pursues a primal beauty created by humans. However, this pursuit is not about going back to the past, but rather a search for a synchronous beauty that transcends time and culture.

Her major exhibitions include Go for Kogei 2024 (Iwase Area, Toyama Prefecture, 2024) and Kuma experiment 2023-24 vol.6 *Haptics in Everyday Life* (Kuma Gallery, Tokyo, 2024). Major awards include the MUFG Special Award at Forbes Japan 30 Under 30 2024 (2024) and the President's Award at the 67th Kanazawa College of Art Graduation Works (2024). Her work is included in the collection of the Kanazawa College of Art.



Yui Wata, *Platonic Dancer*, 2026. Photo: Yoshio Daisuke [on exhibit]  
Portrait by Ran Haraguchi