

# The Superlative Artistry of Japan

Foreword

The Japan Foundation is a specialized public agency, which was established in 1972 with the goal of promoting international understanding through cultural exchange. The foundation organizes a variety of projects in three primary areas of activity: arts and cultural exchange, Japanese-language education abroad, and Japanese studies and intellectual exchange. In the field of visual arts, part of our arts and cultural exchange program, we strive to introduce Japanese art through reciprocal exchanges between Japan and other countries.

As part of these activities, we have regularly organized traveling exhibitions, which tour the world. These events are made up of works from the foundation’s own collection and deal with a diverse range of subjects including crafts, painting, photography, architecture, and design. Some 20 exhibitions are constantly underway and are held at some 100 cities every year.

On this occasion we are pleased to present “The Superlative Artistry of Japan”, a traveling exhibition that presents a cohesive collection of works and materials from various different genres that each place great emphasis on highly skilled techniques, ingenious expressions and concepts, and a high level of perfection that take viewers by surprise. Introducing elaborate Meiji era (1868–1912) *kogei* works that played a significant role in initiating the Japonism trend in 19th century Europe as a starting point, the exhibition in addition to numerous contemporary works of superlative artistry, also comprises capsule toy figures and food samples that illustrate a strong commitment to craftsmanship.

Through this exhibition we intend to introduce the outstanding techniques of each work as well as the worlds of expression that even serve to surpass such skill and finesse, in hopes that viewers will be able to appreciate this specific part of Japan’s creative culture that honors craftsmanship and has constantly shown a thorough sense of meticulousness and devotion towards production processes.

We would also like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to Mr. Yuji Yamashita who served as supervisor of the exhibition, the artists who kindly agreed to take part in exhibiting their works, and to all those who provided their generous support, assistance, and contribution.

The Japan Foundation

**Notes** \* Except in the case of Yamaguchi Akira, all Japanese personal names appear in Western style, with given name preceeding family name.  
\* Data for each work is printed in the order of: number, title, date, technique or medium, dimensions (height by width or height by width by depth)

## Acknowledgements

In addition to the all the artists, we would like to hereby acknowledge the cooperation of the many individuals and organizations that generously assisted with the realization of this exhibition.

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KAIYODO

MAIDURU CO., LTD.

Mizuma Art Gallery

NAKACHO KONISHI ARTS

nap gallery

URANO

Yokodo

## The “Superlative Artistry” of Meiji Era *Kogei* and its Genetics

Yuji Yamashita

Professor, Meiji Gakuin University

I would first like to begin by providing an explanation with regards to the exhibition title, “The Superlative Artistry of Japan”. In the past several years in Japan, “superlative artistry” has often come to be appropriated as a keyword in discussing *kogei* works since the Meiji era such as cloisonné enamelware, metalwork, lacquerware, wood and ivory carvings, and embroidery. One could say that it has become a buzzword of sorts within the field of Japanese art history.

This idiomatic term that has frequently appeared in the context of exhibition titles as well as in catch phrases for magazine features and television programs, of late has indeed come to be appropriated with much ease. As having proposed this term as an active means to articulate upon the magnificent creations conceived by the Japanese people, I in fact raise my brow in slight disapproval at the current circumstances in which it is seemingly used all too prevalently without the consideration it deserves. Nevertheless, I welcome how the effect of this keyword has led to dramatic progressions regarding the reevaluation of Meiji era *kogei* over the last 10 years or so.

The first exhibition I proposed in which the term “superlative artistry” was appropriated in the title was “Superlative Artistry: Excellent Techniques of Metal Crafts, the Late Edo and Meiji Period”, which travelled to four venues throughout Japan from 2010 to the following year beginning with its presentation at the Tokyo annex of the Sen-oku Hakuko Kan.

Most of the exhibited works were from the collection of the Kiyomizu Sannenzaka Museum in Kyoto, and thus had been complied since the 1980s by its director Masayuki Murata (b.1950). Masayuki Murata is the second son of Akira Murata (1921–2006) who is the founder of a company that boasts a world-class share in electronic parts, in particular in ceramic condensers. He began to collect works of Meiji-era *kogei* while working at his father’s company, leaving his position at the age of 47 and establishing the Kiyomizu Sannenzaka Museum in 2000 as a means to exhibit his personal collection. Since having the opportunity to make his acquaintance in 2007, I have made efforts to appeal to various media in hopes to bring the significance of this remarkable collection to public light.

I believe that this exhibition that presented highest level works by artists that have long had an established reputation among experts yet remained unfamiliar to general audiences such as Ichijo Goto (1791–1876), Natsuo Kano (1828–98), Katsuyoshi Shoami (1832–1908), and Shomin Unno (1844–1915), had indeed achieved certain results. For further details I encourage readers to refer to the dialog between Mr. Murata and I entitled “Murata Collection: The world’s most comprehensive collection, its development and future” featured in the catalog published in correspondence to the exhibition.

Thereafter I had planned an exhibition in hopes to present not only metalwork, but also a concise selection of Meiji era *kogei* of various genres from the Murata Collection to a further audience. What was realized as a result was “Kogei: Superlative Craftsmanship from Meiji Japan”, which travelled across 6 venues throughout Japan from 2014 to the following year beginning with the Mitsui Memorial Museum in Tokyo.

Highlights of the exhibition included the cloisonné enamelware of Yasuyuki Namikawa (1845–1927), the metalwork of Katsuyoshi Shoami, the lacquerware of Shosai Shirayama (1853–1923) and Jitoku Akatsuka (1871–1936), and the *jizai* (articulated metalwork) of Kozan Takase (1869–1934). In particular, the breathtakingly super-realistic expression of “Bamboo shoot and plums,” an ivory carving by Ryokuzan Ando (birthdate unidentified) that was presented extensively for the first time on occasion of this exhibition, had been met with significant public response.

Meiji era *kogei* works have been highly appreciated more so overseas than in Japan. Many fine examples of Meiji era *kogei* are housed in the collections of some of the most prestigious museums in the West such as the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Ashmolean Museum in the United Kingdom, as well as the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the United States. The reason for this is that most of the works presented at the world fairs during the Meiji era were purchased there on site, later resulting in many of these private collections being housed in museums.

Over the past 30 years however, Murata has enthusiastically built up his remarkable collection by purchasing superb works of Meiji era *kogei* through overseas dealers and auctions. His extensive collection is said to comprise of well over 10,000 works. “Kogei: Superlative Craftsmanship from Meiji Japan” exhibition had thus contributed to dramatically increasing the recognition of such works, giving rise to a phenomenon that one may call a “Superlative Artistry trend.” It was a rare example in which the presence of a single collector had served to rewrite art history.

In 2017 I have further been responsible for planning an exhibition entitled, “The Marvels of Superlative Artistry: From Meiji Era *Kogei* to Contemporary Art” as a means to convey the genetics of “Superlative Artistry” to our current times. This exhibition is again scheduled to open at the Mitsui Memorial Museum in Tokyo and travel to five other venues throughout Japan. In addition to the Murata Collection, the project will simultaneously present astounding examples of Meiji era *kogei* borrowed from other collections, and further a series of remarkable works by 15 contemporary artists.

Many of these artists are those who remain little known to the general public. Some of them pursue techniques that follow the practices of Meiji era *kogei* such as cloisonné enamelware, metalwork, wood and ivory carvings, yet there are also those who create surprising expressions through materials and techniques that had not been available in the Meiji era such as glass, aluminum, marble, and machine embroidery. I

am convinced that through this exhibition the genetics of superlative artistry will continue to be passed down onto future generations to come.

This exhibition entitled “The Superlative Artistry of Japan”, which will travel across venues throughout the world, is a project that is organized by the Japan Foundation and of which I serve as advisor. The Meiji era *kogei* featured include cloisonné enamelware, ceramics, *jizai* (articulated metalwork), and embroidery works. The majority of the pieces exhibited however, are contemporary works created by artists of varying backgrounds and practices.

Takeshi Kitamura (b.1935) whose textile works are featured, is an artist designated as an important intangible cultural property, and thus in other words has been commended the highest honor as a Living National Treasure. Figures such as the painter Akira Yamaguchi (b.1969) who by now could be considered as the most popular artist in Japan, and Yoshihiro Suda (b.1969) known for his delicate wood sculptures, are both artists who work in the so-called field of contemporary art and have achieved remarkable success over the past 20 years or so. Or there are the likes of individuals such as Naoki Nishiwaki (b.1977) who have received attention within an outsider context, and Naoki Honjo (b.1978) who has already built up a considerable career as a photographer.

To be honest, I feel a certain sense of unease in summarizing these diverse array of artists under the keyword of “superlative artistry,” yet what I place most focus on among the exhibited works are not those that have been created as individual “works,” but are instead “products” that have been produced by companies.

First of all, there is the *Asura Statue* produced by Kaiyodo, a figure production company that is renowned in Japan. Needless to say, it is an imitation figure of one of the most popular Buddhist statues of the 8th century Nara period. Recent years has seen a succession of large-scale Buddhist statue exhibitions taking place in venues such as the Tokyo National Museum, and Kaiyodo has been involved in the production of various figures as related goods of the exhibition. Kaiyodo that was founded in 1964 as a small model store, has by now developed into a company specializing in the production of all kinds of figures in collaboration with comics, anime, and even with art.

Then there are food sample. Food samples are entirely unique to Japan, and since the Showa era one has often heard stories of foreigners visiting Japan for the first time being greatly surprised by such samples displayed in shop windows. In recent years there are fewer shops that display these kinds of food samples, yet I feel it is about time that they find a place in many people’s memories as a “heritage of the Showa era.”

Come to think of it, most works of Meiji era *kogei* were not conceived as “artworks” by individual artists, but had in fact been created as “products” for export. The cloisonné

enamelware of Yasuyuki Namikawa and the *jizai* (articulated metalwork) of Kozan Takase are no exception. Furthermore, the figures produced by Kaiyodo as well as food samples were those that were created to serve a “practical use,” assuming them to be viewed by the masses in a context unrelated to “art.”

That being said, it is here in which the true value of “superlative artistry” is demonstrated. Craftsmen who supported the field of Meiji era *kogei* had simply continued to devote their lives to the production of works without consideration of leaving a name for themselves.

The prosperous era of Meiji era *kogei* had however been short lived due to the very reason for such works being considered as “products.” In the late Meiji era the difference in monetary value between Japan and the West decreased, leading to the decline of tremendous artistic accomplishments maintained since the Edo era through the apprentice system, in turn resulting in the inevitable fall in the level of quality. If such is the case, were the genetics of superlative artistry rendered a candle flickering in the wind, indeed passed on after Japan had been reduced to mere ashes as a result of World War II? I believe that its DNA has been inherited not within the world of “traditional crafts” that has become but an insubstantial authority, but rather in the manufacturing of watches and cameras that flourished within the post-war export industry. It is my understanding that this DNA indeed lives on in the context of companies that earnestly continue to manufacture their products without unnecessarily expanding in scale.

I hope that this exhibition would be an opportunity for viewers overseas to understand how the Japanese people have in general continued to pursue and engage in anonymous manufacturing practices. Nothing would bring me more joy should my proposed keyword of “superlative artistry” effectively serve in achieving this objective.

## Superlative Artistry of Japan: Continuing to Evolve

Masanobu Ito

Executive Program Director, The Japan Foundation

“The Superlative Artistry of Japan” exhibition cohesively brings together works of *kogei* (craft) produced over a century ago for means of export, as well as contemporary art, ceramic, textile, performance film and photography, even including the presentation of capsule toy figures and food samples. Nonetheless, the purpose of this exhibition is not to vainly enumerate the chaotic cultural circumstances that permeate contemporary Japan. The term “superlative artistry” that refers to extraordinary technique and ingenuity has in recent years often been used as an epithet for elaborate works of *kogei* produced and exported in the early Meiji era (1868–1912), yet in this exhibition its meaning is extended to harbor a slightly wider context. In other words, this exhibition serves to seek “superlative artistry” in the techniques, degree of perfection, and the remarkable concepts that do not cease to surprise our eyes, and thus gathers and presents such works and materials across various genres that embody these properties. The American curator and contemporary art specialist, Paul Schimmel, had mentioned in a magazine interview published in 2001 that, “For Japanese artists, their sense of nationality can be observed not in terms of what they make, but in the process of making. What is unique are their artisan technique and the time that they devote to production.”<sup>1</sup> The “superlative artistry” of the 21st century is indeed continuing to evolve.

Since ancient times in Japan, no hierarchical or institutional barrier had been present between art (painting, sculpture) and *kogei*, both coexisting closely in correspondence to the times, with superb works being passed down to future generations. Words such as “*Bijutsu* (art),” “*Kaiga* (painting),” and “*Chokoku* (sculpture)” in themselves had in the first place been established as translations of concepts introduced to Japan from the West in the early Meiji era. In the Edo period (1603–1868) painters were referred to as *Gakou* (crafter of painting) and *Eshi* (master of painting), and together with *Choukou* (*Horishi*, crafter or master of sculpture), *Toukou* (crafter of ceramics), *Shikkou* (crafter of lacquerware), *Kinkou* (crafter of metalwork), and *Mokkou* (crafter of woodwork) had appropriated the character “*Kou* (proficient, skilled technician)”<sup>2</sup>. In this manner, strict hierarchies and boundaries designated by genre as observed in Western art, had been nonexistent.

As an example in which art and *kogei* are strongly and inextricably tied together, one can cite the *Chanoyu* (the Japanese tea ceremony) that was culminated by Sen no Rikyu in the Azuchi-Momoyama Period (1573–1603). In the *Chanoyu* the host welcomes guests with tea within the confines of a space known as a *Chashitsu* (tearoom), yet the setting for its context can be considered as a comprehensive form of art that integrates elements of architecture (tearoom), art (hanging scrolls), and *kogei* (teaware). Furthermore, the Rinpa, a major school of art that was likewise founded during the Azuchi-Momoyama period in Kyoto, had conveyed a comprehensiveness that not only included painting but also calligraphy and *kogei* (such as lacquerware, textiles, and

ceramics), and its decorative and innovative sense of design has influenced the realm of *Nihonga* (modern Japanese-style painting) while also presenting a considerable impact on the life arts in general.

When shifting the perspective to recent Japan, what is indeed evident is that the phenomenon of contemporary art beginning to harbor qualities of *kogei*, and vice versa *kogei* beginning to harbor methods and approaches of contemporary art. While we are beginning to see more and more contemporary artworks that incorporate the sophistication and techniques of *kogei*, it is now not unusual to witness *kogei* works with added elements of an installation-like nature that do not concern the practicality or functionality of craft. Setting the evaluation of such works aside, there is no doubt that the distance between the two is becoming increasingly closer.

The proximity as well as the fusion of art and subculture, is likewise apparent. Subculture such as the likes of anime, manga (comics), figures, and plastic models possess a certain momentum as if representative of the Japanese *Monozukuri* (craftsmanship) culture. Contemporary artist Takashi Murakami has developed his own unique means of expression by boldly adopting into his practice, subculture that had once existed outside the framework of art and was considered subordinate. Murakami's works convey the pointlessness of the stereotypical demarcation between sacred fine art and popular art for the masses. His *otaku*-esque style of expression garners extensive acclaim both domestically and internationally, and also continues to present a significant influence on the next generation of artists.

One could perhaps say that the circumstances that enable the organization of an exhibition that juxtaposes art, *kogei*, and figures can be found in the very nature of Japanese culture that fluidly harmonizes, mediates, and realizes the coexistence of different entities. “The Superlative Artistry of Japan” exhibition begins with presenting *kogei* works from the Meiji era. The Meiji government had promoted policies on modernization with a particular focus on industrial development, and while the export industry at the time had not yet met its maturity, *kogei* works had become its main force, being sent out to international expositions as well as markets in the Europe and the United States. Meiji era *kogei* that had been backed by the high level of technique inherited and developed from the craftsmen of the Edo period, gained high international acclaim and played an important role in initiating the Japonism trend. This exhibition features seven examples of Meiji era *kogei* including cloisonné enamelware, Satsuma ware, *Maki-e* (Japanese gold and silver lacquerware), *jizai* (articulated metalwork), and embroidery. The excessive meticulousness of the paintings that decorate the surfaces of the Satsuma ware, and the elaborate finish of the embroidery work depicting the Yomei gate of the Nikko Toshogu Shrine to the extent that it presents itself like a painting, indeed convey the sheer brilliance of “superlative artistry.”

Perhaps that which best inherits the essence of Meiji era *kogei* in the context of this exhibition, are the figures produced by Kaiyodo Co., Ltd. With an objective of committing themselves to “world-class craftsmanship,” Kaiyodo has continued to visualize peoples’ desires through the mass-production of elaborate figures that while small, pursue realistic expression in the form of free toys accompanying food products, as well as capsule toys. The *Capsule Q* figures presented are products sold at 300-400 yen (around \$3) per piece. While subjects of mass production and mass consumption, the high standard that they maintain and the strong insistence on uncompromised craftsmanship, overlaps with the attitude of the craftsmen of Meiji era *kogei*. Furthermore, the exhibition features highly realistic looking food samples — a unique idea conceived in Japan, and which are now also exported overseas.

The above-all climax of the exhibition however, are the recent and new works created by 12 contemporary artists. There is not necessarily a certain cohesive tendency or correlation in the exhibited works that span across various genres, yet from all of them it is possible to recognize elements of “superlative artistry” that do not cease to surprise the viewer. The works of Satoshi Araki, Riusuke Fukahori, Kimiyo Mishima, and Yoshihiro Suda are based on the insatiable pursuit of realism, while the work of Naoki Nishiwaki conveys the ultimate monotony of repetition. The utilization of highly skilled techniques can in particular be observed in the works of Takeshi Kitamura, Kazuhiro Yamamoto, and Hiroaki Umeda. Naoki Honjo, Takahiro Iwasaki, Yasuhiro Suzuki, and Akira Yamaguchi bring together concept and technical ingenuity in order to transform the values and the very world that we perceive. Through the presentation of these diverse works the exhibition serves to introduce the astounding techniques, creative ingenuity, and worlds of expression that even surpass such aspects, which will shed light upon a part of Japan’s creative culture that is thoroughly insistent in regards to the process of production. One hopes viewers will enjoy the exhibition from a more free perspective, traversing back and forth across various genres and time periods.

It has now been over 150 years since Meiji era *kogei* experienced a burst of popularity overseas. One hopes to look on with anticipation at how viewers will confront and respond to the “superlative artistry” of the 21st century that has inherited this historical DNA.

- 1 “Artists without Borders The Curator’s Eye,” *Brutus*, September 1 2001 issue, Magazine House
- 2 Doshin Sato, *The Birth of “Japanese Art,”* Kodansha Selection Métier 92, December 10 1996, Kodansha Publishing

Meiji Era *Kogei*



1  
Artist Unknown  
*Large Cloisonné Incense Burner with Mt. Fuji and Bird Design*  
Meiji period (1868–1912)  
Wire cloisonné  
77.5 × 27.5 cm



2  
Artist Unknown  
*Cloisonné Jar with Quail Design*  
Meiji period (1868–1912)  
Wire cloisonné  
12 × 7.3 cm



5  
Ryozan Okamoto  
*Openwork Satsuma Incense Burner with Human Figure Design*  
Meiji period (1868–1912)  
Ceramic  
13.9 × 10.5 × 9 cm





**3**  
**Artist Unknown**  
*Articulated Hermit Crab / Articulated Crab*  
 Meiji period (1868–1912)  
 Brass  
 5 × 13 × 10.5 cm / 5.5 × 18 × 10 cm



**6**  
**Artist Unknown**  
*Lacquer Incense Box in the Shape of a Pair of Clams*  
 Meiji period (1868–1912)  
 Lacquer on wood  
 5 × 13 × 8 cm



**4**  
**Kinkozan**  
*Large Satsuma Vase with Flower Viewing Design*  
 Meiji period (1868–1912)  
 Ceramic  
 48 × ø35 cm





7  
**Artist Unknown**  
*Embroidered Hanging with Yomeimon Gate at Nikko*  
 Meiji period (1868–1912)  
 Silk, embroidery  
 169 × 101 × 39 cm





Saroshi Araki  
Riusuke Fukahori  
Yoshihiro Suda  
Kimiyo Mishima  
Naoki Nishiwaki  
Takeshi Kitamura  
Ichio Yamamoto  
Hiroaki Umeda  
Takahiro Iwasaki  
Naoki Honjo  
YAMAGUCHI Akira  
Yasuhiro Suzuki

Figures produced by Kaiyodo  
Food Samples



**8**  
Satoshi Araki  
*In a Corner of a City*

2017  
Iron, plastic, polystyrene board, paper, sand paper, vinyl, oil paint, 3D print  
30 × 30 × 21 cm



Detail of no. 9

**9**  
Satoshi Araki  
*Movie Studio*

2017  
Plastic, wood, paper, sponge, oil paint  
26 × 47 × 47 cm



25  
Yoshihiro Suda  
*Camellia*  
2017  
Painted on wood  
10 × 24 × 18 cm

10  
Riusuke Fukahori  
*Aizuitsu*  
2013  
Aizu-lacquered kneading bowl found in an antique  
shop with epoxy resin and acrylic paint  
9.2 × 40 × 42 cm



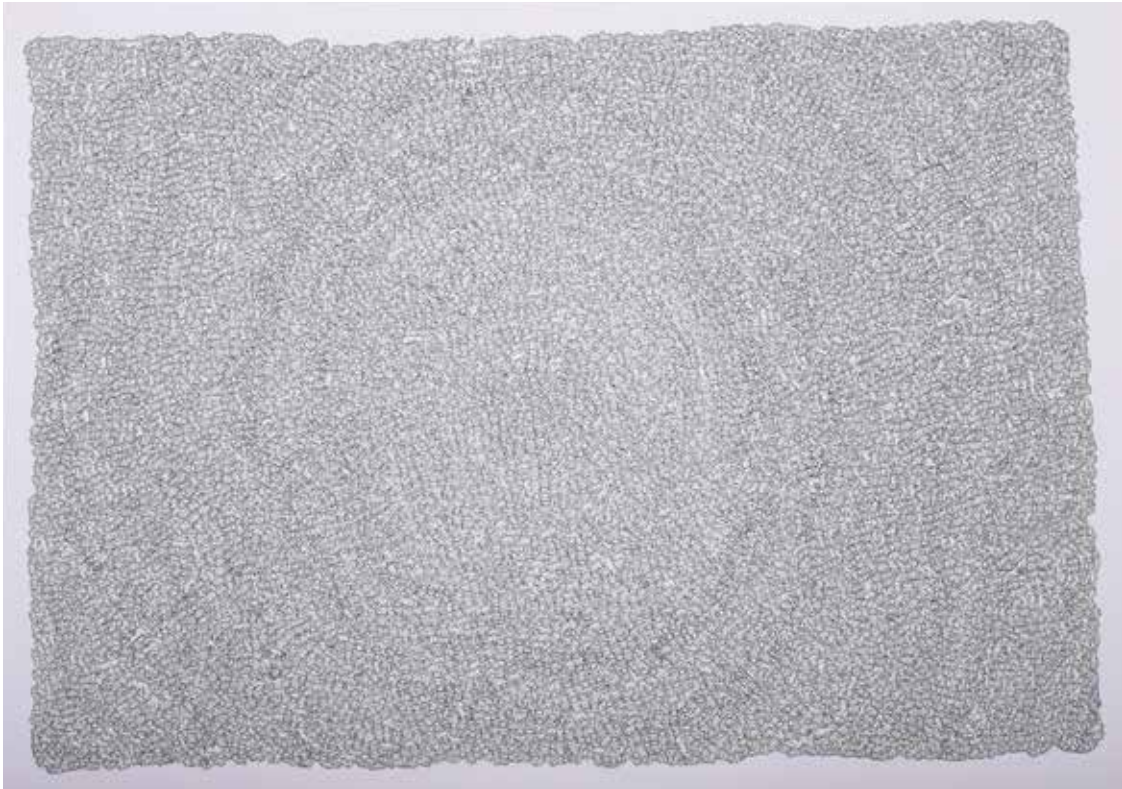


20  
Kimiyo Mishima  
Work 17-C  
2017  
Printed and painted ceramic, iron  
64 x ø51 cm

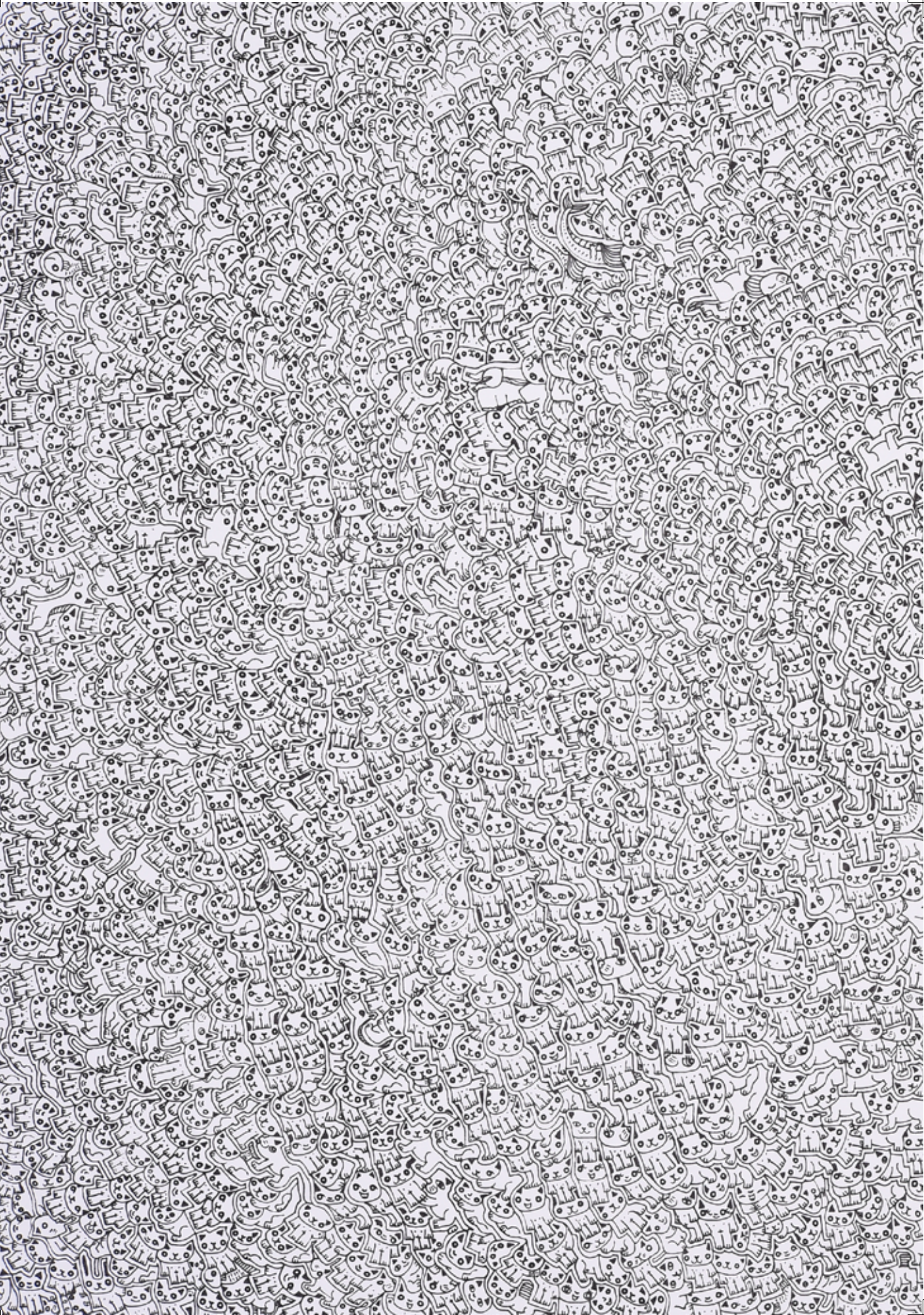


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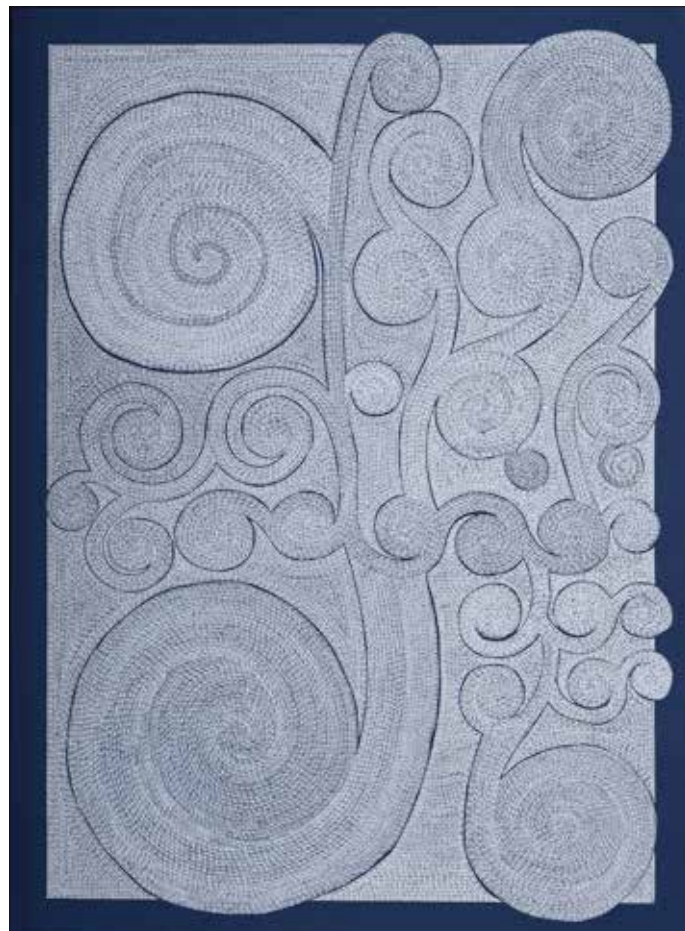




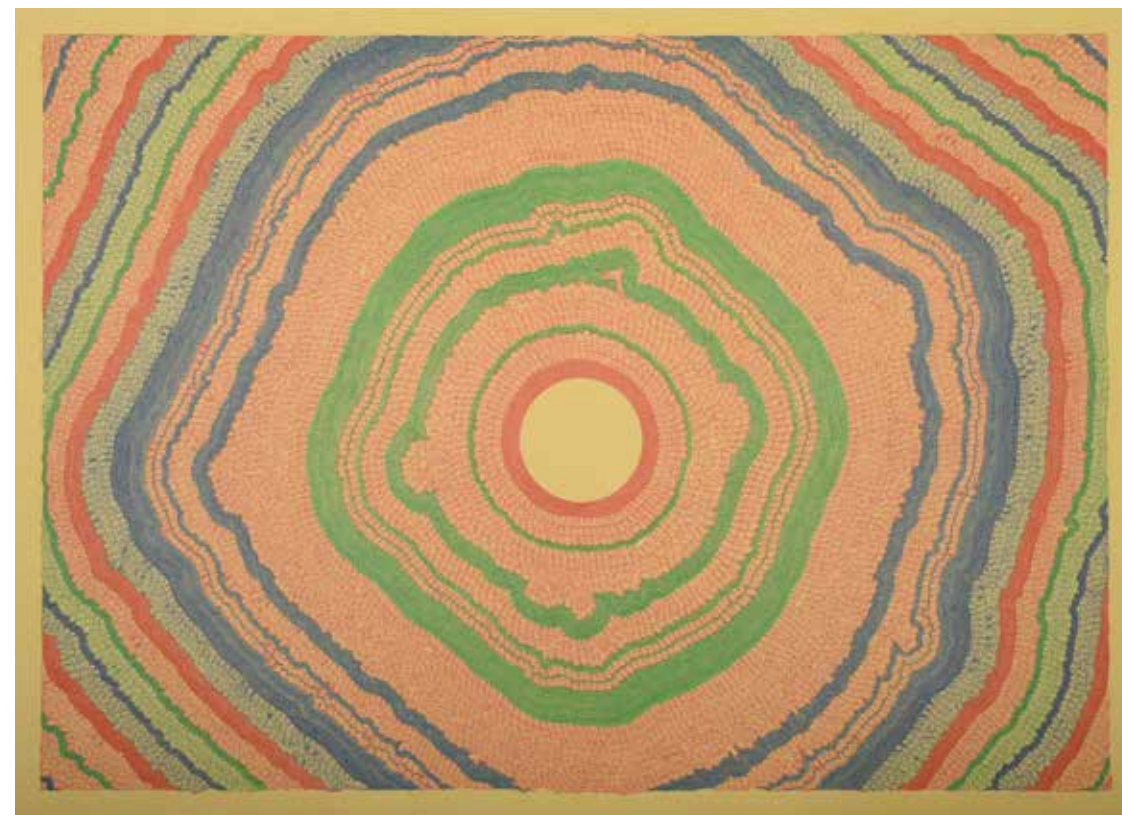
23  
Naoki Nishiwaki  
*Full of Cats*  
2012  
Ballpoint pen on paper  
76.7 × 108.5 cm



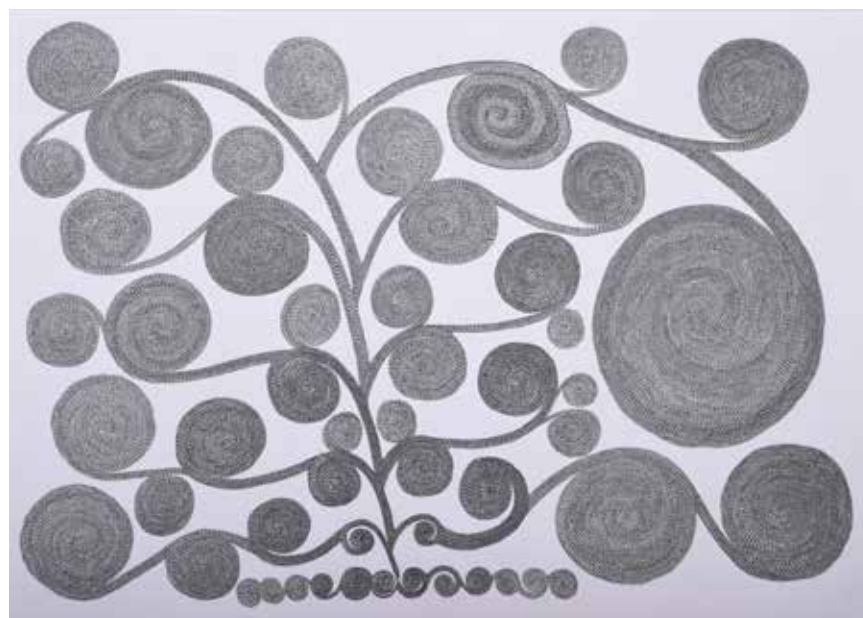




**21**  
**Naoki Nishiwaki**  
*Form of Growth, Blue*  
 2011  
 White ballpoint pen on navy colored paper  
 75.2 × 54.9 cm

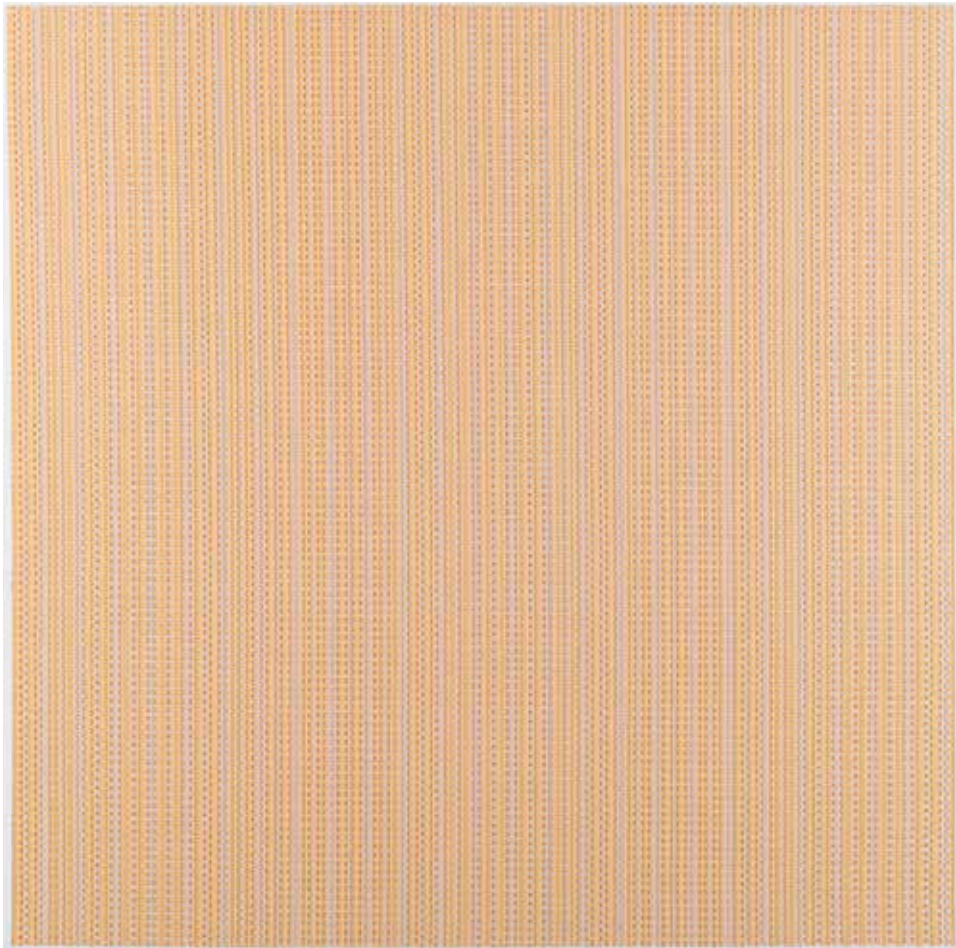


**24**  
**Naoki Nishiwaki**  
*Untitled*  
 2015  
 Color ballpoint pens on yellow colored paper  
 79.5 × 109.5 cm

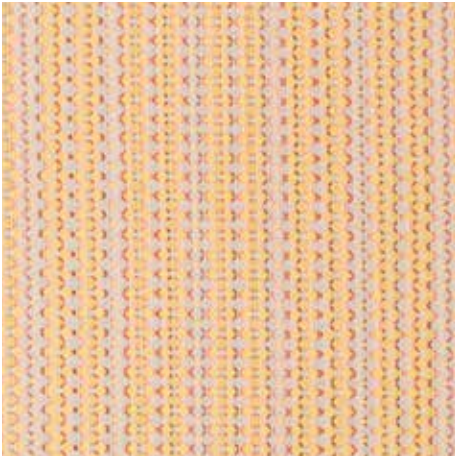


**22**  
**Naoki Nishiwaki**  
*Form of Growth*  
 2011  
 Ballpoint pen on paper  
 76.7 × 108.5 cm





**17**  
**Takeshi Kitamura**  
*Tate-nishiki Fabric with Stripe of Hail Pattern*  
2002  
Silk  
93 × 85 cm



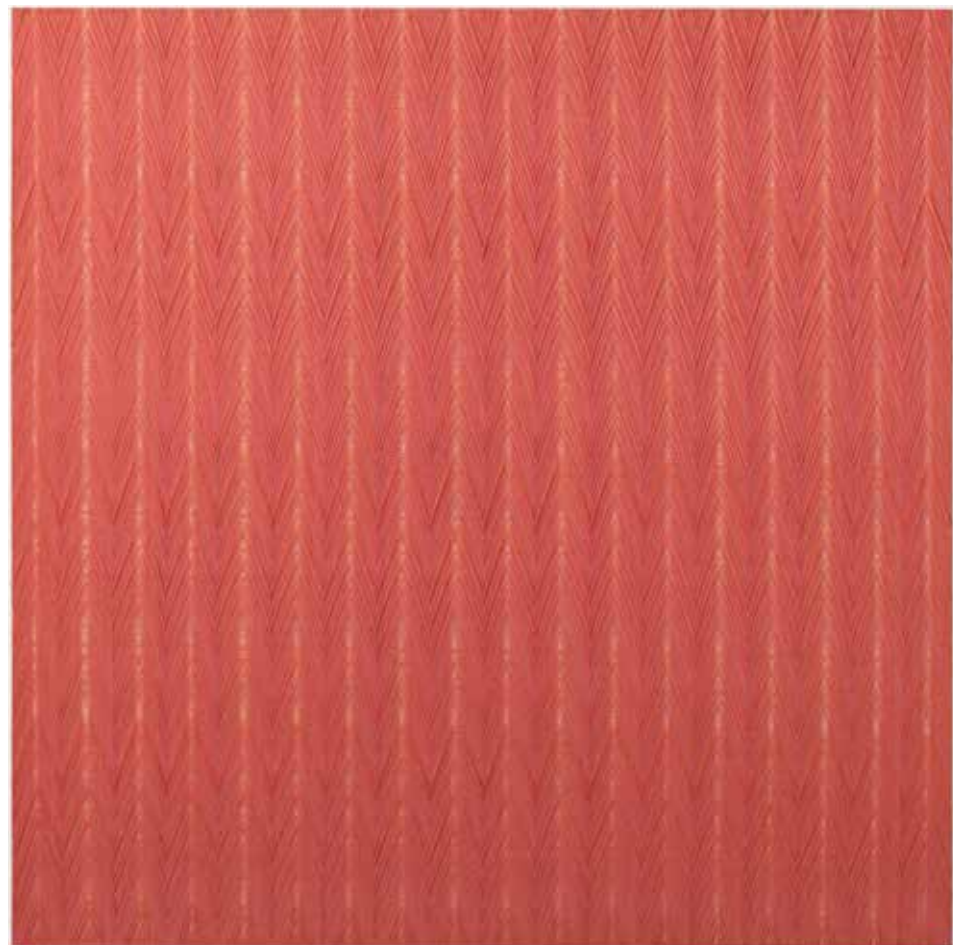
Detail of no. 17

**18**  
**Takeshi Kitamura**  
*Deep-blue Tomon-ra Fabric*  
2003  
Silk  
93 × 85 cm



Detail of no. 18





**19**  
**Takeshi Kitamura**  
*Vermilion Tomon-ra Fabric*  
 2003  
 Silk  
 93 × 85 cm



Detail of no. 19





**32**  
**Ichio Yamamoto**  
*Peacock Pattern (Decorative Pot)*  
 2017  
 Ceramic, platinum glaze  
 20.5 × ø22 cm



**33**  
**Ichio Yamamoto**  
*Rhythmic Movement (Porcelain Box)*  
 2017  
 Ceramic, platinum glaze  
 9.5 × ø20.5 cm





28  
Hiroaki Umeda  
*Holistic Strata Screen*  
2017  
Video  
4 minutes 43 seconds



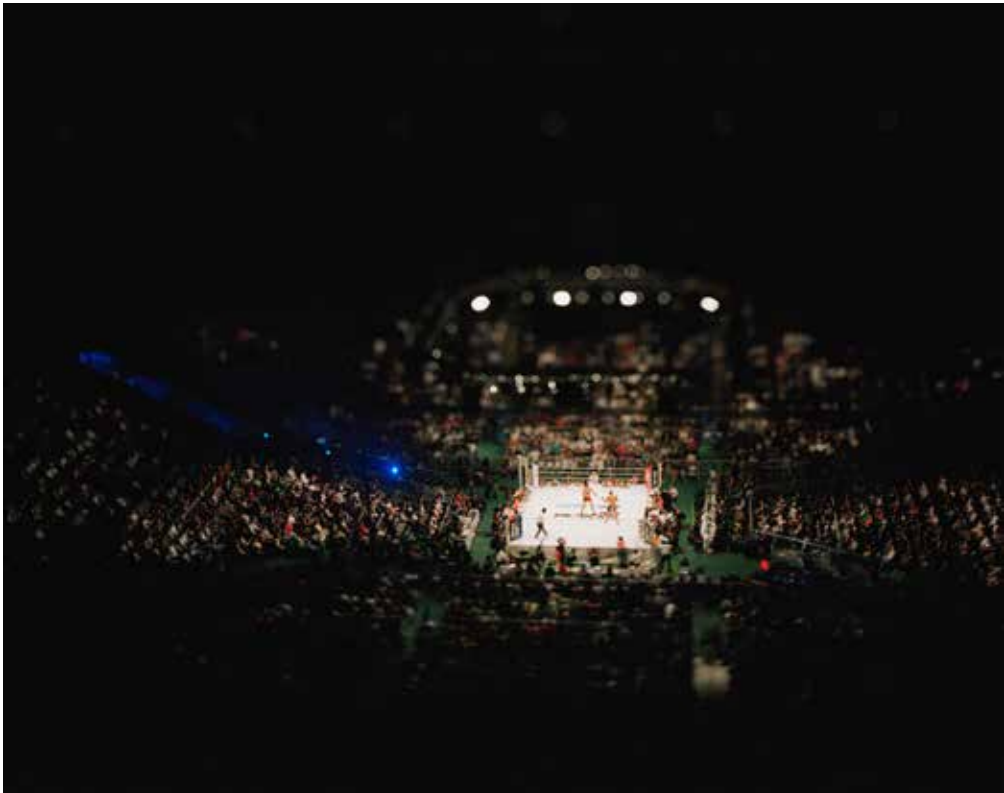




**16**  
**Takahiro Iwasaki**  
***Out of Disorder (Section)***  
2017  
Clothes, acrylic cases  
61.5 × 90 × 20 cm each (a set of 2)



11



12

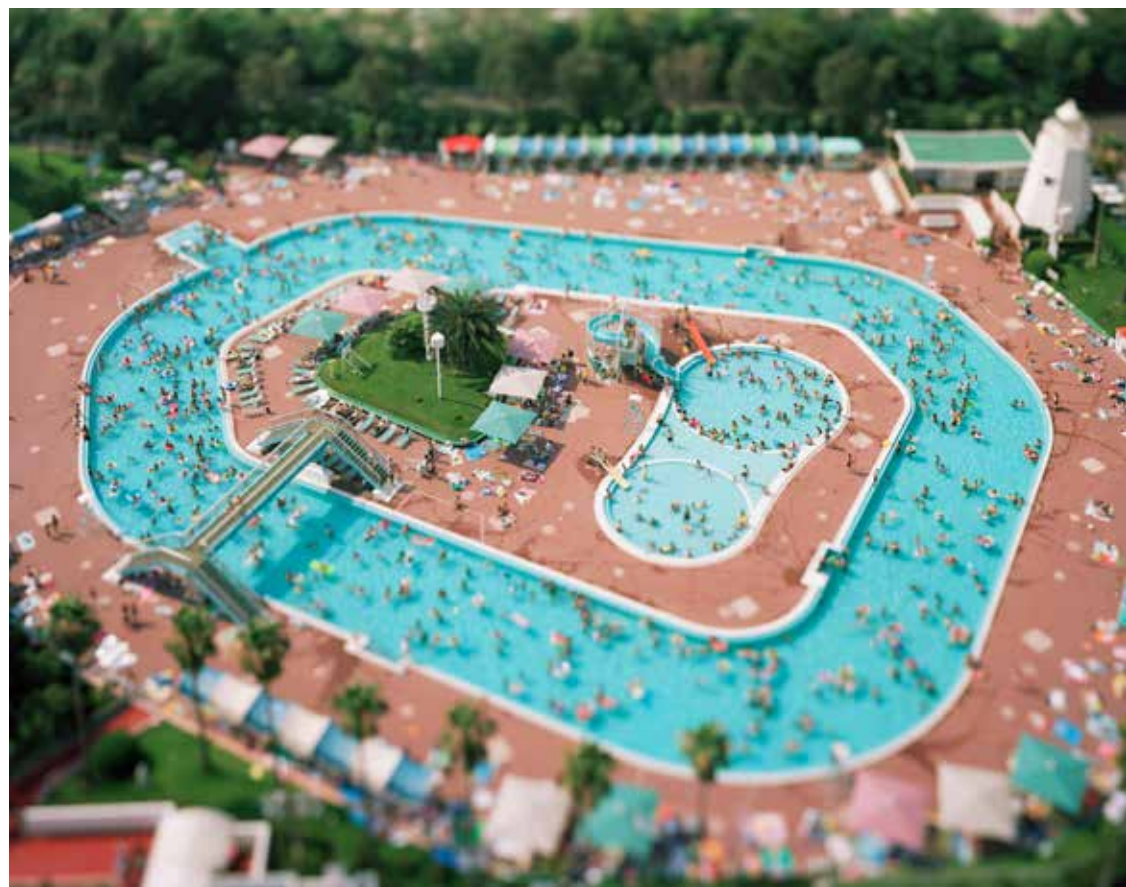


13  
Naoki Honjo  
*Nakayama Race-Horse-Track Chiba, Japan 2005*  
2005  
Chromogenic print  
50.8 x 60 cm

11  
Naoki Honjo  
*Yokohama Kanagawa, Japan 2002*  
2002  
Chromogenic print  
50.8 x 60 cm

12  
Naoki Honjo  
*Saitama-Arena Saitama, Japan 2004*  
2004  
Chromogenic print  
50.8 x 60 cm





14  
Naoki Honjo  
*Tokyo, Japan 2005*  
2005  
Chromogenic print  
120 × 150 cm



15  
Naoki Honjo  
*Kasumigaura-Kita Pier Yokkaichi Mie, Japan 2013*  
2013  
Chromogenic print  
50.8 × 60 cm





29



31



30

29  
YAMAGUCHI Akira  
*Department Store: New Nihonbashi*  
Mitsukoshi, ed. 47/50  
2005  
Inkjet print  
69.4 × 84.1 cm

31  
YAMAGUCHI Akira  
*Department Store: Nihonbashi*  
Mitsukoshi, ed. 33/50  
2011  
Inkjet print  
69.4 × 84.1 cm

30  
YAMAGUCHI Akira  
*Tokei (Tokyo): Hiroo and Roppongi,*  
ed. 66/70  
2005  
Inkjet print  
73.5 × 65.5 cm





**26**  
**Yasuhiro Suzuki**  
*Cabbage Bowls*  
2004  
Paper clay  
15 × 15 × 20 cm

**27**  
**Yasuhiro Suzuki**  
*Komorebi Notebook*  
2016  
Paper  
29.7 × 21 × 5 cm

Figures produced by Kaiyodo



35  
Kaiyodo  
Capsule Q  
2013-2017  
PVC, ABS  
ca. 4.5-7 x 4.5-7 cm each

## Food Samples



**36**  
**Food Samples**  
 2017  
 Vinyl chloride resin  
 Courtesy of IWASAKI CO., LTD. and MAIDURU CO., LTD.  
 ca. 7-20.5 x 6.5-36 x 6.5-26 cm each



## Commentaries on the artists and works

The texts are written by:  
[K. H.] Kenjiro Hosaka (Curator, The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo)  
[M. I.] Masanobu Ito (Executive Program Director, The Japan Foundation)  
[R. M.] Ryuichi Matsubara (Chief Curator, The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto)  
[A. T.] Akira Tatehata (Art Critic, Director, The Museum of Modern Art, Saitama)

### Meiji Era *Kogei*

Meiji Era *Kogei* was born in a new era when Japan opened its doors to the world during the Meiji Restoration, and brings together Japanese traditional styles and techniques with Western elements under radical westernization policies. Such works were introduced all over the world through international expositions, receiving attention for their elaborate technique and exoticism. The Japanese government temporarily promoted and encouraged it as an important industry for acquiring foreign currency, yet it had eventually declined due to sacrifices in quality over quantity in order to meet demands. Today, many works are returning to Japan and being reevaluated domestically, gaining significant interest and referred to as superlative artistry for their refined techniques.

“Cloisonné enamelware” and “hammered metalwork” are both disciplines of artistic metalworking. “Wired cloisonné” (No. 1 and 2) is a technique of creating fine shapes and patterns on a metal vessel through means of copper or a gold wires, followed by applying colored glass in the space between the wires, finally firing it and polishing it to a beautiful work. As viewers can observe, the extremely thin wires have been crafted into shapes such as flowers, birds, leaves, and branches, with the colored glass applied within them shining in brilliant tones. Furthermore, the hermit crab and crab created through forging brass (No. 3) are made so that their hands and legs are able to freely move. Actually taking these works into their hands, people cannot help but be surprised by the way in which they move when manipulated.

“Satsuma ware” is a type of pottery that has been made in the Satsuma domain (in the southwest region of Japanese archipelago) since the end of the 16th century. After the Meiji era Satsuma had become a part of the Kagoshima prefecture, however the pottery continues to be referred to today under its original name. Decorations and patterns are painted on beautiful ivory-colored vessels with enamel overglaze and gold leaf to produce elaborately remarkable works. Many works were exported overseas and gained increasing popularity, however unable to respond to such demands in Kagoshima alone, production of Satsuma ware had also begun in Kyoto. This is what came to be referred to as Kyo-Satsuma

ware, with many potteries engaging in the production of Kyo-Satsuma centering on the workshop of Kinkozan of which is included in this exhibition. (No. 4) A feature of Kyo-Satsuma ware is the more detailed expressions on the surface of the vessels conceived through their source imagery being painted by skilled artists of Kyoto’s renowned painting schools, indeed fascinating viewers in tow with the remarkable glamor of the gold leaf.

“Silk embroidery” can be considered as a significant characteristic of Meiji era textiles. Ordinarily textiles constituted the basic need for clothing such as kimonos. The Meiji era however, had seen the emergence of artisans in the textile field with the ability to create expressions through embroidery and *Birodo Yuzeun* (paste-resistant method of dyeing on velvet fabric) that had equaled the quality of painting, creating and exporting many works. (No. 7) The techniques of producing and dyeing threads of different thickness, and further the skill of embroidering tens of thousands of threads by hand give birth to works that are mistakable as realistic paintings.

Amongst various lacquerware techniques, “Makie lacquer” is considered as an important skill in applying decoration to a vessel, and has been used in various works and furnishings as well as in wooden architecture. First of all, black and red lacquer is applied to the wooden surface, upon which images and patterns are painted in gold. As lacquer does not solidify unless the level of humidity reaches above 70 percent, this quality of not hardening at room temperature is used to an advantage to apply gold powder and gold paint with a hard brush to decorate the surface. As the surface is not smooth like painting on paper or silk, an outstanding level of technique is required. The shell-shaped containers presented in the exhibition (No. 6) are used to store fragrant incense, however they are also considered as a symbol of luck as two shells brought together also signifies harmony between husband and wife.

[R. M.]

### Satoshi Araki

Satoshi Araki (b.1969) who continues to produce numerous diorama works, refers to himself as a “*Jokeyishi*” (crafter of scenery). The word *jokei* is no doubt derived from the term *Jokeyi Mokei* (scenic model) that serves as the Japanese translation for diorama, yet it is originally used to define landscapes and scenes that move people’s emotions. The name “*Jokeyishi*” thus seemingly conveys the artist’s pride and self-confidence in attempting to express the world not by means of 3D copy and computer graphic rendition, but rather through the ability and skill of the human hand. Araki is an individual with a unique background. Having grown up watching special effect films that use miniature models and figures such as Godzilla and Ultraman, Araki joined a home appliances maker as a product designer, and after working as a businessman while simultaneously engaging in making diorama models, had in recent years come to pursue his practice as a freelance artist.

This exhibition features two works entitled, *In a Corner of a City* (No. 8) and *Movie Studio* (No. 9). *In a Corner of a City* is a landscape that can seemingly be found anywhere yet in fact does not exist, depicting a corner of a fictional city including its surrounding environment as envisioned solely through Araki’s own imagination. Everything is thoroughly realistic from each and every detail from the garbage dump to the empty cans (miniature cans measuring approximately 3.5 mm tall) that have been discarded there. On the other hand, *Movie Studio* is not a reproduction of the skyscrapers of Tokyo itself, but is in fact an elaborate diorama of a film set. For this reason this work perhaps brings to focus the landscape that Araki had intended when viewed through the camera’s lens rather than the naked eye. One strongly recommends viewers to observe the work in this way. Araki’s dioramas are already well known to Internet users throughout the world, however this exhibition marks the first occasion of his actual work to be presented overseas.

[M. I.]

### Riusuke Fukahori

Riusuke Fukahori (b.1973) refers to his personal studio lined with rows of goldfish tanks, as a “goldfishing studio.” Fukahori states, “Goldfish are bred through the genetic manipulation of Crucian carp, and despite also recognized as a live form of craft, very well represents the persistent pursuit and obsession that the Japanese harbor towards beauty.” There are often legendary tales of how Nihonga (Japanese-style painting) artists specializing in flower and bird paintings had set up aviaries in their home gardens and engrossingly devoted themselves to producing sketches, yet Fukahori himself has also continued to channel his undivided attention towards goldfish over the past 15 years of his artistic practice.

Although Fukahori’s works at first glance appear like three-dimensional pieces that preserve real specimens of goldfish within acrylic, they are all in fact genuine paintings. Their production method entails painting with acrylic on solidified transparent liquid resin, and then pouring another layer of resin upon it on which paint is applied once again. By repeating this process and overlaying numerous layers of paintings, a three-dimensional rendition of goldfish comes to emerge. The resin is poured in to create each layer in increments of a mere few millimeters, and since the support medium is made of resin, the process is a one-shot opportunity that cannot be reworked or adjusted. This very process of producing three-dimensional paintings as something that requires levels of delicacy, time, and perseverance, could perhaps in itself be described as “superlative artistry.”

Fukahori surprises viewers by enabling goldfish to casually manifest within containers where we least expect to see them, from tubs and wooden measuring cups, to crushed empty cans and desk drawers. In the work presented in the exhibition, five goldfish are released into an old and used Aizu lacquer ware kneading pot. The ripples depicting the surface of water give the impression of reality, and instill the goldfish with a sense of eternal life.

[M. I.]

## Yoshihiro Suda

Yoshihiro Suda (b.1969) consistently engaged in the production of elaborately delicate wooden sculptures even before the term “superlative artistry” had come to gain widespread recognition in Japan. The experience creating a realistic wooden sculpture portraying a dried piece of squid for an assignment in arts college, had served as a turning point for him to pursue his current artistic practice. Suda creates works that are convincingly mistaken for real objects through means of carving and painting pieces of Japanese whitebark magnolia, which is known for its hard texture and its strong resistance against water. His favorite motifs include flowers such as morning glories, tulips, roses, lilies, and camellias, trees like bull bay, as well as weeds and fallen leaves.

Another characteristic of Suda is the way in which he often adopts the method of installation in emphasizing the relationship between the wooden sculptures and the exhibition space. In his installations it is usually the case that a single flower or weed is subtly presented within the expansive exhibition space, and thus it is not uncommon for the viewers to find themselves searching around for the work. As the works are presented in a manner that all to naturally blends into the exhibition room, there are also some viewers who walk on by without noticing the work. On one occasion in the past, a member of the cleaning staff had accidentally removed one of Suda's works that depicted a weed. It was indeed an incident that unexpectedly demonstrated how much the work had appeared exactly like the real object itself.

In this long-term traveling exhibition such installation elements are no longer present, and instead Suda introduces a new work that consists of a pretty camellia flower with a single leaf attached. In Japan camellias are considered as the most reputable flower to decorate the setting of the tea ceremony, yet there was also superstition in the world of samurai that thought of them as bad luck, since the way in which the whole flower drops when wilting had been reminiscent of a falling head chopped at the sword. One hopes viewers will engross themselves in this world of refined beauty that discards everything but the presence of a single flower.

[M. I.]

## Kimiyo Mishima

Kimiyo Mishima was born in Osaka in 1932. Initially working as a painter, Mishima came to establish her figure as an artist with the receipt of the 9th Annual Shell Exhibition Prize in 1965. Thereafter entering the world of ceramics, Mishima gained recognition for her work *Package 78* (1978) in which she created bottles and cardboard boxes through transferring images to ceramic surfaces via the process of silkscreen. Ever since, she has continued to take viewers by surprise with her works that transfers different kinds of printed matter such as newspapers, magazines, and comics to the various ceramic forms she has created.

The work featured in this exhibition comprises a garbage bin filled with an array of empty cans. Although the bin itself is made of metal, the cans placed inside have been created through a combination of both image transfer and hand glazing, thus is significantly more elaborate than that of her other ceramic works. When viewers first encounter the work they are completely oblivious to the fact that the cans are made of ceramic, only to be taken aback in realizing their true nature upon further observation. This is indeed a precise an example of superlative artistry.

Mishima's works have been numerously introduced in Japanese contemporary ceramic exhibitions both in the US and in Europe for her innovative expressions that serve to expand the possibilities of ceramics. Mishima also received the Gold Medal at the “Faenza International Ceramic Exhibition” (Faenza, Italy), renown as the most prestigious award in the field of ceramics. [R. M.]

## Naoki Nishiwaki

Naoki Nishiwaki (b.1977) creates precise and intricate line drawings fundamentally through use of ballpoint pens, within which fine patterns that only appear distinguishable upon close observation are infinitely repeated to cover the entirety of the picture plane. There are two main patterns Nishiwaki appropriates; one of which are images of characterized cats that he refers to as *Full of Cats* that are drawn in a closely packed and proliferative manner across the screen. At first glance the works seem like all-over drawings with no designated center, yet when viewed carefully one can see that the first cat has been drawn in the center of the image from which unbroken lines of cats are depicted as if extending out towards the edges. The other is a pattern reminiscent of braided ropes, also consisting of images that grow outwards in spirals, branching off from the stems one after another like the leaves of a plant, creating a series of large and small swirls to emerge in various places. What is realized as a result are pictorial works that harbor an almost fetishistic sense of life and vitality.

Nishiwaki has also attempted to create concentric works that depict the two patterns of *Full of Cats* and *Braids* in a series of alternating strands. Despite previously working exclusively in black, in recent years he has used ballpoint pens of various vivid colors such as red, blue, and green tones.

Nishiwaki's works are all founded upon the obsessional principles of endless repetition and proliferation. One however cannot help but be surprised by how he continues to produce an oeuvre that serves to impress his unique and rich sensibility through means of an almost mechanical process that entails an extraordinary level of endurance. The world of Nishiwaki's work that simultaneously permeates with a rich poetry and certain air of humor will undoubtedly continue to entice and fascinate our visual perception. [A. T.]

This text is reprinted from the exhibition catalog for “This is Amazing!” (2015-16)

## Takeshi Kitamura

Born in Kyoto in 1935, Takeshi Kitamura began his career in the weaving industry in Nishijin, Kyoto, in 1951. Having trained at various workshops in Nishijin where he acquired advanced techniques and an abundance of knowledge, Kitamura went on to develop and pursue his own practice, gaining much recognition for his work such as receiving the Chairman of Japan Arts Crafts Association Prize in 1965 when he first participated in “2nd Traditional Art Crafts Exhibition of Japanese Textiles.” With the designation of ‘ra’ (a transparent twist-woven gauze-type fabric) as an important intangible cultural property (so-called “Living National Treasure”) in 1995, and that of the ‘tatenishiki’ (warp-faced, compound weave brocade) in 2000, Kitamura has been highly appreciated as one of today's leading artists who engage in unstinting efforts to open up new horizons for woven fabrics through means of his outstanding skills and contemporary sensibility.

The ‘ra’ that is featured in the exhibition, had already been found over 2000 years ago during the Han dynasty in China, enticing people with the beauty of its transparent fabric comprising a complex technique known as the ‘*mojiko-ami*’ (a specific twist-woven technique). Furthermore, Kitamura has not only limited himself to recreating ancient weaving techniques that have seen decline since the Middle Ages, but is also recognized, as one of the forerunners in the field of contemporary ‘ra’ such as his work *Tomon-ra* that constructs patterns as well as light and shadow through unprecedented and dynamic movements of the warp thread. [R. M.]

## Ichijo Yamamoto

Born in the Nagasaki prefecture in 1944, Ichijo Yamamoto began to work in ceramics after receiving training in the production of Arita ware in his home in Yamauchi, Takeo. Due to his experience of making Arita ware porcelain from a young age, Yamamoto had come to gradually develop and refine his skills in the field. In 1985 he began his studies in high purity platinum glaze, learning the basics of his current platinum glaze techniques. For three consecutive years from 1986 his work was awarded a prize at the “Salon de Paris: Japanese Arts Exhibition,” enabling him to establish his figure and reputation. Nevertheless, Yamamoto had not participated in any artist groups or associations, instead continuing to engage in an independent practice that centered on presenting work in solo exhibitions. In 1989 he held his first solo exhibition of platinum glaze works, receiving much appraisal for the execution of his elaborate techniques that indicated aspects of superlative artistry. Ever since he has produced numerous platinum glaze works and has been featured in various media. The “Ichijo Yamamoto Exhibition” that was held as part of the “Panama-California Exposition Centennial: Inamori Pavilion Inauguration Memorial” served as a comprehensive retrospective of his ceramic works, and received high international acclaim.

The works presented on the occasion of this exhibition have been decorated with platinum glaze, and seemingly give the impression of jewelry. The technique of platinum glaze is a painstaking process that entails carefully applying the same porcelain clay used to produce the body of the vessel once again to its surface, further overlaying coats of liquidized platinum to the raised sections and letting it set through firing. Requiring two to three times more stages of firing from its first bisque fire in comparison to standard ceramics, one can say that it is a technique that truly embodies the philosophies of superlative artistry. [R. M.]

## Hiroaki Umeda

In standard dance performance, it is often the case that the choreography, dance, lighting, and music are produced separately. On the contrary, Hiroaki Umeda (b.1977) cohesively engages in all elements of the production himself, including the images that are projected across the stage.

This video work *Holistic Strata Screen* is based on a performance of the same title. The movements of the body vary from one moment to next, at times speedy, at times relaxed, and in other instances completely stationary with the artist's mouth agape. The images move in correspondence to such bodily motions, and vice versa the body moves according to the movement of the projections. On certain occasions, the image=environment would transform suddenly, while the body remains left behind. Depending on the changes in the image it appears to be zooming in or zooming out from the body; that is to say, it could be described as giving the impression of the size of the very space transforming. What is interesting is that despite all elements being linked synchronically, it at the same time presents itself as something that is improvisational.

As mentioned the work has been analyzed separately in terms of body and space, yet this is only by issue of expedience. In reality, what exists between the body / space / music / image is a perfect organicity that cannot be distinctly classified. In other words, it is that which is holistic. One could indeed say that it as a whole constitutes a certain flow of energy.

In 1950s Japan a group known as the “Experimental Workshop” involved the participation of multiple creators across a diverse array of fields in an aim to realize a cohesively integrated form of art (*Gesamtkunstwerk*). Now, over half a century later, Umeda with all but his laptop computer and very own body to rely on, continues to present experimental workshops throughout the world that explore the possibilities of comprehensive art. [K. H.]

## Takahiro Iwasaki

Takahiro Iwasaki (b.1975) is recognized for using everyday materials to create series of works that convey a fine sense of handiwork and the technique of “figurative representation.” One of his main works includes the *Reflection Model* series, in which he cohesively integrates models of architectural structures such as Kinkaku-ji Temple and Itsukushima Shrine with their images that are reflected upon the surface of water upon which they stand. Iwasaki's other series entitled *Out of Disorder* creates ordinarily large structures like steel towers and factories in a miniscule scale from towels, ropes, and toothbrushes. What is common to both is a sense of humor and a concept that attempts to challenge the unified way of perceiving things, as well as the certainty of a skilled manner of craftsmanship.

The exhibition presents one work from the latter mentioned series. As it comprises of two parts like a pair of paintings, they will be referred to as the left wing and right wing for sake of convenience. The towels that have been carelessly placed in a pile are transformed into the ridgelines of a mountain range through means of figurative representation. The singular use of the color black connotes the world of a traditional ink painting depicting *sansui* (literally “mountains and water”). On the tops of the mountain that is anticipated as a place of scenic beauty, one can observe a steel transition tower standing on the left wing, and something like an amusement park with structures reminiscent of a Ferris wheel and roller coaster standing in the right. These “structures” are created from the threads that have been pulled out from the towels, and are highly detailed and delicate. Although there is a tendency for it to be overlooked amidst the impressive level of skillfulness, aspects of positive and negative are respectively expressed in the left and right wings. One wonders whether it would be too farfetched to discern from this work the message that, “the consumer society we enjoy is founded upon the sacrifices of the local regions connected between these transmission towers?” Iwasaki's cool and critical gaze towards contemporary society can indeed be felt within the beautiful yet ephemeral nature of his work. [M. I.]

## Naoki Honjo

Naoki Honjo (b.1978) is the sole photographer whose work is presented in this exhibition. Photography was invented in the 19th century as a device to capture and record reality, yet one could say that another role of photography is to provide people with a different perspective from the everyday in order to change the way in which the world is perceived. Honjo takes mundane scenes that we observe in our everyday lives and catabolize them to appear like “artificially made” landscapes. At first glance his photographs present themselves as if having captured miniature models, however viewers are met with surprise upon the realization that such photographs are in fact images of real landscapes taken through particular camera techniques. Honjo who mentions his desire to “express the artificial feel of the city,” through his work serves to emphasize the fictionality of the world in which we live.

Four of the five works featured in this exhibition is from the *small planet* series, Honjo's first photobook and work for which he received the Kimura Ihei Prize awarded to up-and-coming photographers in Japan. All works have been shot from the sky or from a significant distance above using a large-sized camera. Through using the effect of a tilt-shift lens the focus is brought to a single part of the image, and by blurring its surroundings, a landscape reminiscent of a miniature is conceived. In particular, *Tokyo, Japan 2005* (No. 14) the photograph of a pool in a large-scale print of 120×150 centimeters, presents people playing in the water to painstaking precision and detail amidst the vivid array of colors, and is a monumental work that represents Honjo's early oeuvre.

One suggests Honjo's works to be viewed along with Satoshi Araki's highly detailed diorama works in this exhibition. Many viewers would no doubt feel a strange sense of uncanniness in such conditions in which reality and fiction integrate and coalesce. [M. I.]



## YAMAGUCHI Akira

YAMAGUCHI Akira (b.1969) studied oil painting and Western art at university, however through referencing the styles and techniques of pre-modern Japanese painting had come to establish a style that vividly depicts the contemporary age, thereby serving to challenge the nature and conditions of Japanese art today. In the backdrop of his comical yet elaborately sophisticated works it is also possible to capture glimpses of the artist's cynical gaze towards society.

The exhibition presents three reproductions of watercolor paintings by Yamaguchi. In *Department Store: Nihonbashi Mitsukoshi* (No. 31), the roofs and walls of the building have been removed in a manner often observed in medieval picture handscrolls, and the overwhelming crowds of people gathered within the store is depicted. Along with individuals from our current day, samurais with swords and people reminiscent of Edo townsfolk, as well as those dressed in modern-style clothing are integrated into this daily landscape, and all appear to behave naturally.

*Department Store: New Nihonbashi Mitsukoshi* (No. 29) is a painting of a city in a bird's eye view that follows the techniques of pre-modern *Rakuchu Rakugaizu* (paintings depicting views in and around the city of Kyoto), and portrays the bustling streets of a fictional Tokyo. Groups of people as if part of a stately procession are painted along *Nihonbashi (Taikobashi)* that had once served as a symbol of the city of Edo, while beneath the bridge one can observe cars speeding down the *Shuto Expressway*, thus here too presenting a bizarrely surreal scene in the manner of an actual landscape. As is the case with *Rakuchu Rakugaizu*, Yamaguchi's paintings transcend time and space with ease, inviting viewers to come across various scenes as led through the clouds that appear throughout the picture plane.

A publication of his works is accompanied by a magnifying glass, and it is also recommended for viewers to bring one along with them when visiting this exhibition. The highly detailed depictions that encourage the need for magnifying glasses indeed maintain an immaculate sense of consistency throughout each and every section of the work. One cannot help but be awestruck by the level of painterly meticulousness that is exercised. [M. I.]

## Yasuhiro Suzuki

Yasuhiro Suzuki (b.1979) engages in the production of unique works in an area that is neither simply discernable as contemporary art nor design. His leading works include *Ship of the Zipper*, a work inspired by how the white waves created by a sailing ship had appeared to look like zippers going across the earth, and *Apple Kendama* in which the red Kendama ball (Japanese bilboquet) is replaced by an apple in tow with the anecdote regarding Newton's law of gravitation. What is a common thread within such works is the manner by which they appropriate the technique of "figurative representation." Suzuki takes familiar objects in our surroundings and vividly transforms them into things that are special through means of shifting and changing the perspective by which we look at them.

*Cabbage Bowls* (No. 26), are a series of precisely molded cabbages made of paper clay. The leaves of a real cabbage are heated in a microwave from which a mold is made using silicone. Through the process of applying thin layers of paper clay to the mold and carefully removing them after they have dried, Suzuki produced a total of seven types of cabbage leaves. Three or more of such leaves are combined to create a cabbage, while on their own they serve as a 'bowl.' Although they look like real cabbages as one would find in the natural world, their value has been peculiarly transformed into that of practical bowls. Suzuki elaborates on the means by which he had come to produce the work stating, "When I saw that some water had collected inside a cabbage leaf, I discovered the discreet presence of a 'bowl.'"

Not only the form, but also the hardness and texture has been reproduced to almost the same level as a real cabbage. Being that they are bowls one would ideally like viewers to take them in their hands to feel and gain a sense of the texture, however in this case on suggests trying it with a real cabbage.

[M. I.]

## Figures produced by Kaiyodo

Kaiyodo, which initially started as a small plastic model store, became a figure maker specializing in the manufacturing and sales of garage kits (small-quantity produced assembly models) in the 1980s, and today continues to engage in various projects as a unique group that comprises a diverse array of talented internal model-making staff.

What had brought Kaiyodo's name to wide recognition beyond that of limited enthusiasts were the chocolate eggs released by Furuta Confectionery Co., Ltd. in 1999. Kaiyodo had been responsible for manufacturing the toys that were placed inside the hollow center of the egg-shaped chocolate. A series of figures depicting the animals of Japan that was proposed and prototyped by Kaiyodo's model-maker Shinobu Matsumura were included in the snack, becoming a great hit and leading to a boom in the candy toy industry capturing the interests of both adults and children. The small figures with their remarkable quality and vivid use of colors that distinguished them from previous candy toys were of a high standard that could withstand adult appreciation, resulting in them being cherished as collection items. Kaiyodo has greatly opened up the possibilities of figures that serve to visualize the desires of contemporary people.

Centering on introducing the Japan's animal collection for which Matsumura had produced the prototypes, this exhibition presents approximately 100 figures from the *Capsule Q Museum* series that inherits the candy toy concept of the social phenomenon that was the chocolate egg. Sold at 300-400 yen a piece, although the figures made of ABS resin are no longer considered as mere accompaniments to food products and are treated as capsule toys in their own right, the sense of excitement and anticipation of not knowing what is inside until actually opening it is something that remains unchanged. While in miniature size and mass-produced, the high standard that they maintain and the strong insistence on uncompromised craftsmanship, overlaps with the attitude of the craftsmen of Meiji era *kogei*, and adds a sense of vibrancy to the new visual culture of contemporary Japan.

[M. I.]

## Food Samples

Many restaurants in Japan are known to place a showcase which they display food samples depicting the culinary dishes that are served there. Instead of looking at the menu, visitors browse such food samples that present themselves as genuine renditions, thus checking the name and price of the dish and deciding what to eat before entering.

Department stores had played a significant role in the popularization of food samples that is said to have originally been devised in Japan in the 1910s. Until recently, all department stores had large dining halls that were targeted at families, serving a diverse selection of cuisines from Japanese food to Chinese and western dishes, even offering a children's menu. Food samples had also proved useful due to the need of efficiently attending to large number of customers and increasing turnover rates. It was indeed wasteful to display real food in the storefronts every day, as well the fact that it was susceptible to discolor with the passage of time. Presenting elaborate food samples that appeared to permeate with a tasteful scent and stimulate one's appetite had served as more appealing to customers. Furthermore, financial circumstances such as being more economically friendly in the long run had again encouraged the proliferation of food samples.

Early food samples had generally entailed making a mold from vegetable gelatin and filling it with wax in order to cast its form. Its weakness of melting and breaking easily however had in recent years resulted in the wax to be substituted by silicone and resin, enabling more intricately accurate and realistic molding to be realized. Such food samples are in principle produced according to order. In response to requests from restaurants that devise ideas to differentiate themselves from their competition, each and every food sample is instilled with a sense of "individuality" from the way the food is served to the ingredients used, as well as the overall color tones. All food samples are indeed handmade and produced through the efforts of the numerous 'unnamed craftsmen' whom work in production companies.

[M. I.]

Reference: Yasunobu Nose, *The Japanese Who Eat With Their Eyes – The Birth of Food Samples* (2002, Asahiya Publishing)

List of works

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Artist Unknown  
*Large Cloisonné Incense Burner with Mt. Fuji and Bird Design*  
Meiji period (1868 – 1912)  
Wire cloisonné  
77.5 × ø27.5 cm

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Artist Unknown  
*Cloisonné Jar with Quail Design*  
Meiji period (1868 – 1912)  
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Artist Unknown  
*Articulated Hermit Crab / Articulated Crab*  
Meiji period (1868 – 1912)  
Brass  
5 × 13 × 10.5 cm / 5.5 × 18 × 10 cm

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Kinkozan  
*Large Satsuma Vase with Flower Viewing Design*  
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Ryozan Okamoto  
*Openwork Satsuma Incense Burner with Human Figure Design*  
Meiji period (1868 – 1912)  
Ceramic  
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Artist Unknown  
*Lacquer Incense Box in the Shape of a Pair of Clams*  
Meiji period (1868 – 1912)  
Lacquer on wood  
5 × 13 × 8 cm

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Artist Unknown  
*Embroidered Hanging with Yomeimon Gate at Nikko*  
Meiji period (1868 – 1912)  
Silk, embroidery  
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Satoshi Araki  
*In a Corner of a City*  
2017  
Iron, plastic, polystyrene board, paper, sand  
paper, vinyl, oil paint, 3D print  
30 × 30 × 21 cm

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Satoshi Araki  
*Movie Studio*  
2017  
Plastic, wood, paper, sponge, oil paint  
26 × 47 × 47 cm

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Riusuke Fukahori  
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Aizu-lacquered kneading bowl found in an antique shop with epoxy resin and acrylic paint  
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Naoki Honjo  
*Yokohama Kanagawa, Japan 2002*  
2002  
Chromogenic print  
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Naoki Honjo  
*Saitama-Arena Saitama, Japan 2004*  
2004  
Chromogenic print  
50.8 × 60 cm

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Naoki Honjo  
*Nakayama Race-Horse-Track Chiba, Japan 2005*  
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Naoki Honjo  
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Naoki Honjo  
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Takahiro Iwasaki  
*Out of Disorder (Section)*  
2017  
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Takeshi Kitamura  
*Tate-nishiki Fabric with Stripe of Hail Pattern*  
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Takeshi Kitamura  
*Deep-blue Tomon-ra Fabric*  
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Takeshi Kitamura  
*Vermilion Tomon-ra Fabric*  
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Kimiyo Mishima  
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Naoki Nishiwaki  
*Form of Growth, Blue*  
2011  
White ballpoint pen on navy colored paper  
75.2 × 54.9 cm

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Naoki Nishiwaki  
*Form of Growth*  
2011  
Ballpoint pen on paper  
76.7 × 108.5 cm

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Naoki Nishiwaki  
*Full of Cats*  
2012  
Ballpoint pen on paper  
76.7 × 108.5 cm

24 | p.31 |

Naoki Nishiwaki  
*Untitled*  
2015  
Color ballpoint pens on yellow colored paper  
79.5 × 109.5 cm

25 | p.24 |

Yoshihiro Suda  
*Camellia*  
2017  
Painted on wood  
10 × 24 × 18 cm

26 | p.48 |

Yasuhiro Suzuki  
*Cabbage Bowls*  
2004  
Paper clay  
15 × 15 × 20 cm

27 | p.49 |

Yasuhiro Suzuki  
*Komorebi Notebook*  
2016  
Paper  
29.7 × 21 × 5 cm

28 | pp.38-39 |

Hiroaki Umeda  
*Holistic Strata Screen*  
2017  
Video  
4 minutes 43 seconds

29 | p.46 |

YAMAGUCHI Akira  
*Department Store: New Nihonbashi Mitsukoshi, ed. 47/50*  
2005  
Inkjet print  
59.4 × 84.1 cm

30 | p.47 |

YAMAGUCHI Akira  
*Tokai (Tokyo): Hiroo and Roppongi, ed. 66/70*  
2005  
Inkjet print  
73.5 × 65.5 cm

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YAMAGUCHI Akira  
*Department Store: Nihonbashi Mitsukoshi, ed. 33/50*  
2011  
Inkjet print  
59.4 × 84.1 cm

32 | p.36 |

Ichio Yamamoto  
*Peacock Pattern (Decorative Pot)*  
2017  
Ceramic, platinum glaze  
20.5 × ø22 cm

33 | p.37 |

Ichio Yamamoto  
*Rhythmic Movement (Porcelain Box)*  
2017  
Ceramic, platinum glaze  
9.5 × ø20.5 cm

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Kaiyodo  
*Asura Statue*  
2017  
Polystone  
40 × 20 × 10 cm

35 | pp.50-51 |

Kaiyodo  
*Capsule Q*  
Animals in Japan ( 3 Tokyo, Megapolis and Islands, 4 Shikoku, 5 Lake Biwa, 6 Hokkaido/ Mammals in Ezo, 7 Yaeyama Islands)  
Complete Collection of Owls bringing happiness 1, 2, 3  
Excavation of Dinosaurs Cretaceous: the Era of Strongest Dinosaurs, the Sea of Plesiosaurus  
Night Banquet in the Midsummer: Insects Swarming to Sap  
Collection of Caterpillars 2  
2013 – 2017  
PVC, ABS  
ca. 4.5 – 7 × 4.5 – 7 cm each

36 | pp.52-53 |

*Food Samples*  
2017  
Vinyl chloride resin  
Courtesy of IWASAKI CO., LTD. and MAIDURU CO., LTD.  
ca. 7 – 20.5 × 6.5 – 36 × 6.5 – 26 cm each

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*Food Sample (Spiny Lobster)*  
2017  
Vinyl chloride resin  
Courtesy of MAIDURU CO., LTD.  
8 × 35 × 19 cm

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*Food Sample (Sashimi Boat)*  
2017  
Vinyl chloride resin  
Courtesy of MAIDURU CO., LTD.  
24 × 46 × 15.5 cm



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