

**MOT Collection:  
Seven Beauties in the Bamboo Forest  
Special Feature NOMURA Kazuhiro  
Eye to Eye**

**Sat. 3 August- Sun. 10 November 2024**

**Collection Gallery, Museum of Contemporary Art  
Tokyo**

**Foreword**

The Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo houses over 5800 works of art from modern to contemporary, with a particular emphasis on post-war art. The MOT Collection exhibitions present works from that collection, adopting a different approach on each occasion to advertise the diverse attractions of contemporary art.

In a display dubbed “Seven Beauties in the Bamboo Forest” and dominated by recent acquisitions, the first floor will focus on seven female artists. The title “Seven Beauties in the Bamboo Forest” comes from that of a work by KONO Michisei held by the museum. In Kono’s painting, the ancient Chinese “Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove,” spurning worldly concerns to congregate in a bamboo grove and engage in philosophical chat are transformed into women in vibrantly-hued garb. Inspired by the sight of these seven women of different cultures and eras mingling harmoniously among the flowers and birds of a light-filled bamboo forest, for this exhibition we decided to illuminate the work of some female artists whom the museum has hitherto had few opportunities to showcase. The character 妍 (*ken*) of the title, meaning beauty, generally refers to a certain grace or refinement in appearance, but here refers to how each of the seven artists has engaged with the idea of beauty, and produced art accordingly. Offerings from MADOKORO (AKUTAGAWA) Saori and TAKAGI Toshiko, both born exactly a century ago, URUSHIBARA Hideko, KOBAYASHI Donge, and MAEMOTO Shoko will comprise mainly new additions, while the works of FUKUSHIMA Hideko and ASAKURA Setsu, already in the collection, will be grouped together. To coincide with this display of work by the seven women, the first floor will also play host to a special exhibit by NOMURA Kazuhiro, an artist with a career characterized by the exploration of the creative act via conceptual works.

The third-floor exhibition, titled “Eye to Eye,” turns its attention to different types of gaze. Kicking off with gaze as painted by the likes of Alex KATZ, NAKAMURA Hiroshi, and NAKAZONO Koji, “Eye to Eye” goes on to include a diverse array of works, including sculptures in reflective materials by TADA Minami and Monir Shahroudy FARMANFARMAIAN; the works of Georges ROUSSE, who creates illusory installations in derelict buildings and photographs them; and an installation by KAIHATSU Yoshiaki, who brings a playfulness to the space between the visible and invisible. There will also be a special exhibition of work by HASEGAWA Shigeru, a painter consistently dedicated to interrogating the status of paintings as “things to be seen.”

In closing, we would like to express our heartfelt

gratitude to all of those who have honored us with their unstinting cooperation in realizing this exhibition.

**Seven Beauties in the Bamboo Forest**

**I. TAKAGI Toshiko**

TAKAGI Toshiko (1924–1987) was a fiber art pioneer whose works woven from vibrantly colored thread evolved in the course of her career from the two- to the three-dimensional. Works by Takagi acquired following the “Fabric in Space” exhibition at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum in 1987 were subsequently passed on to the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo. Opportunities to display them have however been few to date, so we are pleased to do so now on the centenary of the artist’s birth.

Born into a family of weavers in the Nishijin district of Kyoto, Takagi learned traditional weaving techniques from her father, and design from embroidery artist KISHIMOTO Keishun. In 1940 a masterfully executed *tsuzure-ori* (tapestry weaving) wall hanging by the 16-year-old Takagi was selected for the exhibition commemorating the 2600th anniversary of the Chrysanthemum Throne. Following this was a series of textiles featuring figurative renderings of seasonal motifs, people at work, and other subjects, submitted to exhibitions like the Nitten. Gradually though Takagi’s works took on a more abstract appearance, exemplified by *Tapestry, Face* (1963) with its raised middle section drawing attention to the presence of the thread in arresting fashion. Much of this change can likely be attributed to life with her husband avant-garde artist YAGI Kazuo and their children, and from 1962, contact with the diverse sensibilities of students at the Kyoto City University of Arts. To give shape to what she found herself wanting to do, she “abandoned without a moment’s hesitation” the *tsuzure-ori* that had been her family’s livelihood for generations, and growing tired of exhibiting at Nitten with its size limits on entries, from 1975 onward mainly exhibited solo.<sup>1</sup> Moving away from interior decorations to hang on walls, she began making three-dimensional forms hung from ceilings for exhibition.

Takagi described her art-making process as: encountering an attractive form, then a short interlude trying out different things using scrap paper, followed by cheerfully setting about the weaving as calculated, then sewing together the roughly-woven pieces only to find bulges, pliable parts, and thickness emerging outside of those calculations, hanging the finished piece from a tree in the garden, and watching it swing and sway at will.<sup>2</sup> In *Form* she joins colorful plain-woven triangles in linen and silk, inserting bamboo that may well have been cut from the thicket growing behind her workspace, to complete a work that seems to harbor the artist’s joy in its creation.

1. Takagi Toshiko, “Ori ni yoru zōkei saku hin” [Woven sculpture], *Gendai no me: Newsletter of the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo* (January 1978).

2. Takagi Toshiko, “Tsurusareta mono” [The hung object], *INAX Art News* (June 2, 1986).

## 2. Madokoro (AKUTAGAWA) Saori

This year also marks 100 years since the birth of MADOKORO (AKUTAGAWA) Saori (1924–1966). The Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo is showing two works by Saori as part of the Museum to Museums project (organized by the executive committee of the Madokoro Akutagawa Saori Archive) in which ten art museums around Japan exhibit works by the artist from their holdings, in a bid to reexamine her short-lived but productive career.

Saori began learning painting and music in her teens, going on to study music at the Tokyo Academy of Music (now the Faculty of Music of Tokyo University of the Arts) before turning to painting following her marriage to composer AKUTAGAWA Yasushi. Though as a newlywed she had strived to make a living from singing, she eventually gave up, the difficulty of making her own voice coexist with her husband's world of sound leading her to abandon music as well. As she threw herself instead into keeping house, "from somewhere within me the urge to vent all that stifled self-expression arose, like a lament."<sup>1</sup> This led her to study wax-resist dyeing with NOGUCHI Michikata, and learn painting from INOKUMA Gen'ichiro. Saori wrote that she filled sketchbooks with the constant stream of ideas that spilled from within her in the manner of the ceaseless clamor of a cicada.<sup>2</sup> *Woman XI*, which she entered in the 40th Nikaten exhibition at the suggestion of OKAMOTO Taro, was displayed in room no. 9 (commonly known as the Taro room), and won a special prize. Saori chose dyeing as a technique because she was unable to get comfortable with oil paints, and was seduced by the dripping of the wax and luster of the dyes,<sup>3</sup> but this fast way of making art, which witness painter IKEDA Tatsuo described as "dynamic and spontaneous"<sup>4</sup> doubtless also suited a woman set on giving shape to her productive urges in the limited time available while taking care of children. *Prince Izanagi Creating Japanese Islands* takes as its theme Japanese myth, on which Saori turned her gaze following a trip overseas in 1954. The woman and god with glittering eyes in the aforementioned two works dominate the center of each canvas by means of intense color contrast. Because the works are dyed, they do not rely on the substance of paint, solely the power of the image itself, bearing directly down on the viewer. Saori vowed to continue tearing down the notion that painting equals oil painting, using the time-honored techniques of dyeing to portray modern Japanese women and make paintings for the modern world,<sup>5</sup> and her works are testament to that determination.

After divorcing in 1959 Saori traveled to the United States where she studied design and oil painting, and married MADOKORO Yukio before returning to Japan in 1962. This seems to have been a time of significant change in both her style, and her life, but one suspects that her vocal desire to "be none other than an artist! Someone who tells the truth of the spirit! Who carries on striving, without reward, to achieve this!"<sup>6</sup> remained undiminished.

1. Akutagawa Saori, "Watashi no kekkon to rikon" [My Marriage and Divorce], *Fujin club* (December 1958).

2. Akutagawa Saori, "Tsukuru mono no yorokobi" [The joy of creation], *Fujin no tomo* (June 1956).

3. Akutagawa Saori, "Sasayakana geijutsu" [Modest art], *Geijutsu Shincho* (September 1955).

4. Ikeda Tatsuo, "Ten'nyo no uta—Madokoro Saori ga Akutagawa Saori datta koro" [Song of the heavenly maiden—When Madokoro Saori was Akutagawa Saori] (1995), reprinted in *Defiant, Passionate, Intense: The Life and Work of Saori Akutagawa* (Tokyo Shimbun, 2024).

5. Akutagawa, "Tsukuru mono no yorokobi."

6. Madokoro Saori, "Jinsei o nido ikiru shiawase" [The happiness of living life twice], *Fujin seikatsu* (August 1964).

## 3. FUKUSHIMA Hideko

FUKUSHIMA Hideko (1927–1997) was active primarily as a painter from the late 1940s to the end of the 1980s. This will be the first substantive showing of her works at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo for some time, since the acquisition of a large number mainly from the 1950s and '60s following special exhibition at a 2012 collection show.

After graduating from Bunka Gakuin, while continuing with her own painting, from 1951 to around 1957, Fukushima joined friends with artistic and musical aspirations, plus her brother Kazuo, in a group that art critic TAKIGUCHI Shuzo dubbed the Experimental Workshop. The activities of the group, which included a lighting designer and an engineer in its plastic arts and music sections, were designed to create a cross-genre, integrated "Environment." As part of this, in 1953 Fukushima and Kazuo exhibited *Foam is Created*, an automatic slide projection featuring circular and spherical objects and verse by Fukushima: "Foam is born again / Through the white mist / An indistinct life steps forth / From inside the eternal resonance / It becomes an infinite configuration / The theme of my celestial body / Is being created," against Kazuo's soundtrack.

Taking this "foam" as a starting point for viewing Fukushima's painting, we find the idea appears to have led to techniques using water, and expression employing circles. Paint dissolved in water manifests on white paper in subtle gradations of light and shade. Tin cans have also been dipped in ink or paint and pressed onto the paper to form circles of various sorts. This pressing technique is a distinguishing feature of Fukushima's output, and is not confined to round objects but includes works formed by pressing onto the paper linear objects, or soft items like fabric, in a method of production that could be said to incorporate the properties of "matter" as well as water and paint.

Color plays a large part in this production. There are paintings composed of the adjacent hues of red, orange, yellow, and green, and paintings where Fukushima employs sumi ink to represent a range of colors, yet it is blue that at times constitutes the main tone, and at others, lingers faintly. In due course this was to culminate in canvases entirely in blue. In later years Fukushima wrote that it was water that fascinated her most, and that this fascination had become linked to blue to summon up spaces.<sup>1</sup>

Tagiguchi said of Fukushima's works that "her paintings possess an inescapable motive that resides elsewhere than in showing off her expression."<sup>2</sup> If Fukushima's work can be

seen as driven not especially by a need to express herself, but in part at least by that to find the “indistinct life” that doubtless exists somewhere in foam, one suspects she returned time and again to water, circles, and blue in an attempt to confirm this visually.

1. Fukushima Hideko, “‘Mizu’ to ‘ao’ no keiseki” [Traces of water and blue], *Bessatsu bijutsu techō* (Summer 1982).
2. Takiguchi Shuzo, “Gasō no aida” [Between painting aspects] (1975), reprinted in *The 12th Exhibition Homage to Shuzo Takiguchi: Hideko Fukushima* (Satani Gallery, 1992).

#### 4. URUSHIBARA Hideko

URUSHIBARA Hideko (1929–2002) came to notice in 1952 with her first solo show, staged on the recommendation of art critic TAKIGUCHI Shuzo at the Takemiya Gallery, and from there continued to produce drawings and collages for presentation mainly at similar solo exhibitions. Thanks to a connection with Urushibara’s family the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo managed to acquire a number of her works in FY2023, and this is our first opportunity to present examples of her output from the 1950s to 2000s en masse, plus archival material.

Urushibara’s father, woodblock artist URUSHIBARA Mokuchu, traveled to Europe in 1910, and while continuing to make woodblock prints was employed part-time at the British Museum. Hideko spent the years from her birth in London, to the family’s return to Japan in 1941, on foreign soil, the British Museum a familiar playground. This environment, and the aesthetic likely cultivated there, were to have a major influence on her own later work. In 1946 she graduated from the International School of the Sacred Heart, and the following year went to study under painter ABE Nobuya. Abe’s studio was frequented by other young artists including Fukushima Hideko, MIYAWAKI Aiko, ENOMOTO Kazuko, KUSAMA Yayoi, and KATSURA Yuki, the talents of each nurtured through dialogue and critique of their work.

In Urushibara’s oil paintings, beings neither man nor beast gaze out from shut-off spaces devoid of depth, a whiff of quiet menace suffusing the canvas. In their search for novel forms of expression after the war, many of the new painters that appeared in the 1950s depicted distorted, crushed human figures, in works that seemed to condemn contemporary society. Urushibara’s works did not conform to this trend, and can perhaps be viewed as attempts to gain proximity to the unknown, via powers of imagination nurtured within the artist’s own interests and surroundings. In her drawings on paper too, amid the vibrant hues of colored pencils and watercolors emerge distorted spaces in which cell-like things, bones, eyes and buildings mingle freely. In the collages that appear from around the 1980s, ornamental patterns, pointillist patches, wavy lines and eyes, all rendered in pen to an almost excessive degree, coalesce, the surrounding blank space highlighting a gloss and mystery reminiscent of jewels or fruit. The diaries kept by the artist intermittently from 1979 to 2000, though day-to-day jottings, consist of calligraphic writing, drawings, and collages, and likely served as esquisses for her works. This creativity on paper born out

of everyday life is the manifestation of a powerful energy, product of Urushibara’s personal vision.

#### 5. KOBAYASHI Donge

The career of printmaker KOBAYASHI Donge (1926–2022) spanned from the early 1950s to the 2000s. Kobayashi’s output was showcased in an exhibition at the Sakura City Museum of Art in 2019, laying the foundations for further study. The Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo acquired a large number of her works in FY2022, on display here for the first time.

Daughter of a family of traditional confectionery makers in the Tokyo district of Kameido, Koto-ku, from an early age Kobayashi Donge (real name Fumie) was a day-dreamer with a love of poetry and painting. She studied Western-style painting at Joshibi University of Art and Design, but mesmerized by a Lucien COUTAUD copperplate print spotted in a museum, with an introduction from printmaker KOMAI Tetsuro, she mastered the techniques of etching and aquatint at the copperplate printmaking workshop run by SEKINO Jun’ichiro at his home. Around this period, through Sekino, Kobayashi also became acquainted with poet and scholar of French literature Horiguchi Daigaku, in what was to become a lifelong relationship of mentor and pupil. A Buddhist monk she knew gifted her the name Donge, from the *udonge* (udumbara) plant said to flower only once every 3000 years, and from then on she presented her work under this name. In 1956 she staged her first solo exhibition, at the Yoseido Gallery. The gallery also staged exhibitions by Akutagawa Saori, Urushibara Hideko, Fukushima Hideko, and Enomoto Kazuko, in a bid to shine a spotlight on the work of five promising young female artists. Kobayashi maintained a link particularly with Urushibara, until the latter’s death.

Kobayashi’s works employ the technique known as engraving: using a specialized tool called a burin to inscribe directly onto metal plate. She chose this technique out of a desire to express in copperplate the elegant lines of nihonga painter KOBAYASHI Kokei. The plate remaining after printing is scored with sharp, clean lines, the printed work highlighting the beauty of those lines. The women appearing in prints inspired by the likes of UEDA Akinari’s *Tales of Moonlight and Rain*, the novels of Edgar Allan Poe, and Oscar Wilde’s *Salome*, regard the viewer with a cool, slightly unearthly gaze.

“A copperplate print is created through incising and scratching the solid material of a plate with the sharp blade of a burin. Mystical lights and shades are generated through the entangled and overlapping multi-layers of thin lines, which are similar to the thread-like stems of udumbara flowers. To me, this medium is a perfectly ideal and irreplaceable form of expression. My burin engraving is based on a technique that I happened to discover. Thus, similar to a deep-sea fish, I can silently sink into the very depths of my own inner world, via my own original method.”\*

\*Donge Kobayashi, "Dōhanga to watashi" [Copperplate prints and me] (1972), reprinted in *Donge Kobayashi Retrospective: Femmes Fatale* (Sakura City Museum of Art, 2019).

## 6. ASAKURA Setsu

ASAKURA Setsu (1922–2014) is known as a stage designer, but early in her career tracing back to the 1940s, she was a painter of nihonga. Amid growing posthumous reappraisal of her painting, in FY2017 the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo acquired a number of works subsequently displayed in collection exhibitions, starting with *Weavers of Worlds—A Century of Flux in Japanese Modern/Contemporary Art* in 2019 to mark reopening of the Museum following renovations. On this occasion we present not only Asakura's paintings, but material connected to her career in stage design.

Asakura grew up living in the atelier-cum-residence designed by her father, sculptor ASAKURA Fumio, its unique spatial composition helping to cultivate her own aesthetic sensibilities. Tutored at home rather than attending school, in accordance with the philosophy of her father, Setsu spent her days in his studio, sketching models. It is here she refinded her feel for the volume and movement of human figures. The sketchbooks she left contained, as well as female figures, scenes from the fishing villages, coal mines, and factories she visited with like-minded companions who shared her questions about how best to represent modern society in art. In each case, no matter how the subject is formed, one can sense Asakura's incisive gaze, searching for its framework and core.

The motifs and themes that emerged from confronting reality in this manner manifest on the painted plane as color, line, and texture. For example, in the case of the two figures sitting on the ground, the men's exhaustion and hopelessness are expressed in vibrant, clear pigments, the addition of a robust frame stressing the work's powerful presence. *1963*, believed to have been inspired by a mineshaft scaffold in a coal field, is a dynamic piece of expression, its vertical composition on a large sheet of plywood reminiscent of the towering structures sprouting up in a society being transformed ahead of the Tokyo Olympics.

Having worked in stage design alongside her painting endeavors, in 1965 Asakura joined the Japan Association of Theatre Designers & Technicians, and over time repivoted from painting to work for the stage. It is not hard to imagine her starting to question, and find irksome, the idea of taking raw sensations captured visually, in fact by the whole of her body, and sitting in solitude before the canvas, sealing them into painted space, and deciding to instead evoke those sensations in three-dimensional temporary spaces, as an alternative reality. One suspects that sharing sensations with a large number of people as she collaborated to create a performance, in turn sharing with the audience the new reality subsequently unfolding, gave Asakura the great joy and sense of achievement that come from connecting directly with the community.

## 7. MAEMOTO Shoko

MAEMOTO Shoko (b. 1957) began her career as an artist in the early 1980s. In recent years her works have attracted fresh attention amid renewed interest in the art trends of this time, the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo also acquiring a number in FY2023, shown here for the first time.

Dominating the gallery is an enormous dress. Looming larger than life, it has tentacles akin to a sea anemone's, crawling along the floor; glitter and mirrors added to pink, blue and gold causing the giant garment to sparkle uncannily. In making her dresses Maemoto draws on the dolls she had played with as a girl, and her work on theatre and dance productions and film screenings at Kyoto University's Seibu Kodo hall during her student years at the junior college of Kyoto Seika University. Initially placed on stretchers or in picture frames in the manner of paintings and displayed on the wall, by moving off the wall and standing alone these dresses now evoke a more theatrical space. This husk of a dress absent a performer's body excites the imagination, in the viewer's eyes its swollen form starting to resemble the repository for a mass of pent-up desires.

Though the huge dress speaks of covetousness and self-aggrandizement, in her book Maemoto extolled the idea of living in proud, queenly fashion, noting that if everything is mine, I should also consider the oceans the hem of my skirts, the earth my garden, and all the earth's children my own.<sup>1</sup> Such a belief is also echoed in reliefs like *I am the one who will protect my child* and *In a Pandora's Box*, products of Maemoto's personal experience of birth and child-raising, manifesting here as a giant eye that seems to stare down the evil eye, and a mother sitting on a lotus flower. Rendered in air-dry stone clay, these images are an extension of the tactility and joy the artist felt making reliefs as a student by coloring papier mâché and sticking on sequins. This motion of hands based on personal experience, and skill in customizing existing materials, can be found throughout Maemoto's body of work.

"My works have their origins in 'the diversions of women and children' but to my mind, those 'diversions' have a vital element that must surely be the foundation of art, that is, making 'for someone else,' with all one's heart."<sup>2</sup> An artist who says she made a *kamidana* (Shinto household altar) for herself when she set her sights on a career in art, Maemoto continues to make altars and imbue them with different prayers. Such invocations are also to be found in *Cocoon of sorrow 2024*, a work that embodies Maemoto's impressions as one living in these times, and serves as an offering to comfort the soul of the young woman who was first victim of the coup in Myanmar, and the many others who followed.

1. Maemoto Shoko, *Jissen! Zettai ohime-sama shugi* [A practical guide to living like a princess] (Takarajimasha, 2000).

2. "Sakka hōmon: Maemoto Shoko—Wastashi o miteiru watashi" [Artist visit: Maemoto Shoko—The me looking at me], *Bijutsu techō* (November 1983).

## Special Feature NOMURA Kazuhiro

### 8.

Since the mid-1980s artist NOMURA Kazuhiro (b. 1958) has moved away from conventional painting to develop a multifaceted approach to art-making that encompasses sculpture, performance, video, writing, and his own unique painting format, as he engages in a wide-ranging, ongoing interrogation of the meaning of creative acts, and what makes something appealing. While at university he became close to and was influenced by ENOKURA Koji (1942–1995), known as a Mono-ha artist, and says he was also drawn to the Arte Povera trend in later 1960s Italian art. In 1988 Nomura went to study in Dusseldorf, where he experimented extensively, primarily with readymades, and explored what he calls “painting-style works” consisting of arrangements of tiny dots of pigment. He returned to Japan in 1993, and has continued to produce new work.

I-350, I-351 and I-352 are three of over 400 pieces by Nomura based on the Western-painting formats of drawing, work on canvas, and mural. A predetermined number of points in five colors are used to make up the same image (a toy potted plant) according to rules devised by the artist, with an element of randomness thrown in. However these extremely delicately rendered picture planes are difficult to view in the usual manner. Keep observing, searching for a way to see, and numerous questions around how the paintings came about are thrown into sharp relief: questions about the viewpoint and distance that will allow the viewer to grasp the whole image, for example, or the state of the paint as matter, or rigor and probability associated with the act of placing color. Altar of Laughter, made from buttons tossed by visitors, can be viewed as a more liberal unfolding of this “act.” The act of multiple people as one throwing different buttons at a target is repeated on each occasion as a game-like challenge, maker and taker swapping places at a dizzying pace, a constantly changing creative setting manifesting midway between failure = 0, and success = 1.

A single shoe, mismatched books and toys, lost buttons... the absence and unbalance so frequently featured in Nomura's works could be said to consistently also present alternative possibilities to that absence and lack of balance. Through the works of Nomura Kazuhiro, with their built-in metamorphosis and formation, we find ourselves engaging repeatedly with the genesis of creation.

## Eye to Eye

### 9. Eye to Eye: The painted gaze

Can you sense multiple gazes watching you from the wall? This floor focuses on various manifestations of the gaze, and presents a diverse collection of works as examples. By way of introduction, observe the gazes in paintings in this room.

In *Linda* by Alex KATZ (b. 1927), a long sideways composition with the figure's face audaciously chopped at top and bottom, the eyes of the woman look straight into ours, as if exchanging glances in the rear-view mirror of a car. Her hint of a smile and the soft, almost backlit glow of the

white background seem to warmly enfold this intimate exchange. Meanwhile, in the Andy WARHOL (1928–1987) self-portrait in silkscreen on canvas, the gazes of the six Warhols sink into the flat silhouettes of different colors, giving the work a mysterious aura that only serves to befuddle the viewer.

In *Eye from Chiaroscuro*, NAKAMURA Hiroshi (b. 1932) takes six vivid yellow picture planes, draws lines that give each a different sense of depth, and paints as if floating within, black-and-white chiaroscuro faces looking intently in our direction. Their gazes, arranged code-like against the background, guide and disrupt the gaze of the viewer.

The children NARA Yoshitomo (b. 1959) likes to draw are distinguished by the way they glower at us from under their brows, with eyes at once innocent and rebellious. In *Post Human* by NAKAZONO Koji (1989–2015), countless faces jostle on the canvas, yet never meet each other's gaze, and the eyes looking this way also seem dull and empty. In *Untitled*, a white face with multiple eyes rendered in coarse brushstrokes is overlaid with other faces in black lines, but none of the eyes meet those of the viewer.

Being conscious of how our gaze intersects with that in a painting may help us to sense what that painting is trying to show us. At the same time, engaging our gaze with the painting may also prompt us to think about what we are seeing, and how.

### 10. Reflection: The involving gaze

In this section we focus on three female sculptors who experimented with unique modes of expression in the 1960s, using new materials and techniques: Minami TADA (1924–2014), Aiko MIYAWAKI (1929–2014), and Monir Shahroudy FARMANFARMAIAN (1922–2019).

Tada Minami, born exactly a century ago this year, employed materials such as glass, aluminum, steel, and acrylic in sculptural works that attempt to draw the surrounding space inside them. After studying Western painting at Joshibi University of Art and Design, she was drawn to the stream of materials and technologies emerging in the turbocharged economy of Japan's high-growth years, and began to make sculptures, teaching herself as she went along. After establishing Minami Tada Associates in 1962 she went on to create architectural spaces combining cutting-edge technology with craftsmanship in projects including the Imperial Hotel, and Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre, plus works that merged seamlessly into busy urban spaces, and natural settings. Taking in the scene, and their own figure, bending and warping in the distortion of light reflected in the materials, the viewer finds that even sensation and cognition seem to unravel.

Miyawaki Aiko is another artist who took an interest in the innovative materials of the 1960s and used them to explore new methods of expression. She is best known for *Utsurohi*, an outdoor sculpture made from stainless steel wire, but began with paintings in oils blended with the likes of enamel and marble powder. The paintings presented here all share a three-dimensional quality, the bumps and hollows, textures peculiar to the material connecting endlessly on the

picture plane, almost straining toward the viewer. Rhythmical chains of irregular forms draw the eye and give the works an irresistible tension.

The work of Monir Sharoudy Farmanfarman is dominated by the time-honored geometric patterns of Islam, and the decorative technique of *ayeneh-kari* mirrored glass used since the 17th century. For centuries, mirrored glass has been embedded in building interiors, the mystical spaces generated by light effects deeply connected to religion and meditation. Fascinated by the beauty of mirrors, which change visage as people pass by, the artist explored taking a traditional art form and expanding it into different environments, and by the 1960s was producing sculptural works in a singular style.

## 11. Paintings are for looking at: HASEGAWA Shigeru

Painter HASEGAWA Shigeru (b. 1963) has been exploring the possibilities of figurative painting in his own highly original manner since the 1990s.

Hasegawa contends that “paintings are for looking at,” so it is sufficient to do just that. Freely acknowledging that ultimately, paintings are merely images rendered on a flat surface, no more, no less, accordingly, through his experience of looking at paintings Hasegawa has physically internalized the language and techniques of visual expression tried and tested throughout the painting history of East and West, and made them fodder for conversion into his own distinctive paintings. Supplementing works acquired in recent years with others on loan, at the artist’s direction this chapter surveys paintings completed from 1995 to 2023, taking its cue from his multilayered series of forms and images.

*happy white macaron-chan* and *lucky chocolat crème brulee-chan*, two pet pups rendered in effortless strokes on canvases approximately three meters high, are prime examples of the large-format paintings produced by Hasegawa in quick succession in the late 1990s. In these two works, while choosing a common subject in Western painting—dogs—the artist invalidates any narrative qualities by opting for startling scale and a style shorn of shading.

Like the majority of Hasegawa’s works, on their debut these two did not have titles. Declining to supplement the meaning of a painting with words, to add a story or message, could be described as an article of faith for Hasegawa, for whom the painting’s qualities of form are paramount, but perhaps it is that the artist himself could not clearly prescribe what he was painting. Giving some of his works titles utilizing odd phonetically equivalent Japanese characters, dubbing this a “service” to viewers, is a tactic trialed by Hasegawa since 2019, although their addition does seem designed more to muddy the meaning of the painting even further.

On the same wall are a number of later paintings also derived from the canine motif. One shows pole-like forms reminiscent of vegetables and furniture legs combined to make the kana characters イヌ (*inu*) meaning dog. Another is a form resembling a strange, hairy creature in the shape of the kanji character 犬, also meaning dog. In another painting, four fish combine to form the character 毛 meaning hair or

fur. A painting in which pleated fabric somehow resembles the outline of a dog’s countenance also connects to the canine theme, at a meta level. So are these paintings of dogs? The deliberate arrangement of elements, an enumeration of variations in ways of depicting, may in the case of all these paintings really only stress that the dog theme was merely an excuse to put a picture on the surface of the canvas.

Texts by

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