MOT Collection:
Walking, Traveling, Moving
—From the Great Kanto Earthquake to the Present
Eye to Eye
Sat. 6 April- Sun. 7 July 2024
Collection Gallery, Museum of Contemporary Art
Tokyo

Foreword

The Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo houses approximately 5,800 artworks in its extensive collection, which spans the modern and contemporary periods with a focus on art of the postwar years. Each "MOT Collection" exhibition introduces artworks in the collection from a different angle, to demonstrate the diverse appeal of contemporary art.

The first-floor section of this exhibition, "Walking, Traveling, Moving: From the Great Kanto Earthquake to the Present," comprises a variety of works, from sketches drawn by KANOKOGI Takeshiro on a visit to Tokyo immediately after the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake to document the devastated city, to works by Olafur ELIASSON produced for his solo exhibition at MOT in 2020, when restrictions on "moving" were in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. FUIIMAKI Yoshio's masterpiece Scenes from the Sumidagawa River (1934) will also be on display, along with newly acquired works by KUSANAGI Shinpei, MITSUSHIMA Takayuki, and Wataridori Keikaku [ASO Tomoko, TAKEUCHI Akiko] created for the "MOT Satellite" exhibitions. We hope that by tracing the footsteps of artists from different eras and countries, the works shown here will serve to enhance our perspective on the world, and the society in which we live.

The third floor, under the title "Eye to Eye," focuses on different types of gaze, presenting the "painted gaze" in the works of artists including Alex KATZ, Roy LICHTENSTEIN, NAKAMURA Hiroshi and NAKAZONO Koji, and "involving gaze" in, for example, the sculptures and reliefs of TADA Minami and Monir Shahroudy FARMANFARMAIAN using reflective materials. This section also covers a plethora of techniques, with a special emphasis on looking and seeing, including the "camera eye" of MATSUE Taiji capturing the workings of cities and nature around the world; and "critical gaze" directed on minute landscape details by the video work of Maya WATANABE.

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.

I. Tokyo Observed Through Walking

Walking through the city and depicting the scenery encountered—the first room presents various scenes of Tokyo spanning from the Great Kanto Earthquake, of which 2023 marked the centennial, to the period following World War II.

The Great Kanto Earthquake that occurred on September 1, 1923, also caused a devastating fire that killed over 90,000 people. After receiving news of the incident, KANOKOGI Takeshiro (1874 - 1941) traveled from Kyoto to Tokyo that very month, accompanied by the Japanese-style painter IKEDA Yoson. While at times incurring much criticism from disaster victims, the two walked around sketching the scenery of the downtown area across the Sumida River which had been reduced to ashes. Kanokogi, who had studied academic techniques in realism and composition under the tutelage of French historical painter Jean-Paul LAURENS, later painted the work September 1, 1923, based on photographs and sketches. This dramatically composed historical painting depicts people fleeing amidst the smoldering rubble and smoke from a close-up perspective. On the other hand, in the numerous sketches he drew on site, he calmly observes the collapsed buildings and people digging up the rubble from a more distant viewpoint, and captures their contours through clear unhesitant pencil lines.

Artist and newspaper cartoonist YANASE Masamu (1900-1945) suffered the devastations of the earthquake in Tokyo shortly after the first exhibition of Mavo, a Japanese avantgarde art group founded by Yanase during the late Taisho period together with the likes of MURAYAMA Tomoyoshi who had returned from Germany. Yanase was arrested by the military police, who took advantage of the chaos and confusion caused by the earthquake to crack down on socialists. After his release, he temporarily fled to the city of Moji in the Fukuoka Prefecture, where his father lived, yet the following month he returned to Tokyo where martial law had not yet been lifted, bringing with him many relief supplies. Yanase documented this journey in a journal and three sketch books. Such sketches illustrate how the artist, from the very midst of the city he had returned to for the first time in a month, attempts to capture people's lives and the streets where the traces of damage were still fresh. In this way, many painters walked through Tokyo, observed the city from different perspectives, and produced paintings that documented their experiences and the scenes they encountered.

About 10 years later, printmaker FUJIMAKI Yoshio (1911-1935), who went missing at the age of 24, produced plain sketches of the landscapes along the banks of the Sumida River. The riverside was a place where the typical Edo townscape coexisted with the modern cityscape such as the Shirahige Bridge, which was rebuilt as part of the urban planning carried out following the city's reconstruction efforts. The vast panorama is created through a remarkable 'editing' process that combines various perspectives, whereby the view observed from this bank is at times connected to what extends further beyond the opposite bank, presenting viewers with a riverside landscape that harbors a unique air of repose.*

Also featured, are drawings by MATSUMOTO Shunsuke (1912-1948), as well as postwar sketches by KATSURA Yuki (1913-1991) and ASAKURA Setsu (1922-2014), which have been added to the museum's collection in the past 10 years. Through the works presented in this room, the observant eye and path trodden by artists as they walked through the city of Tokyo that had twice been devastated and burnt to

ashes, appear to intersect one another repeatedly beyond time

* OHTANI Yoshihisa, Fujimaki Yoshio: Shingi (Fujimaki Yoshio: Truth or Falsehood), Gakugeishoin, 2010 also at the festival that year). In *Trans-Siberian Travel*, a work inspired by the view from the train window on this occasion, Bito achieves a new mode of expression wherein the shapes of the buildings seen in profile are abstracted and unfold one after another as if rotating within the picture plane.

2. Visiting the Site

This section focuses on artists who engaged in a means of expression known as "reportage painting." These artists visited actual sites of political and social events in postwar Japan to collect information and paint their paintings.

The years immediately after Japan's defeat in World War II were marked by impoverishment and starvation for many, giving impetus to labor and grassroots community movements. 1950 was the outbreak of the Korean War, with Japan serving as a rear base. With more than 600 US military bases remaining even after Japanese sovereignty was restored with the end of the Allied Occupation, anti-base gained protests and peace movements momentumnationwide. In 1952, BITO Yutaka (1926-1998) and other artists of the Zen'ei Bijutsukai (Avant-Garde Art Society) joined the Ogouchi Village Cultural Operation Unit to support opposition to the construction of a dam to supply power to a US military base. The following year, the Seinen Bijutsuka Rengo (Young Artists' Alliance) was formed in solidarity with young people confronting such issues and working for peace. Bito, IKEDA Tatsuo, and NAKAMURA Hiroshi (b. 1932), all in their 20s at the time, were also part of the group.

Homeward Journey is a work that was presented at the 1st "Nipponten" unjuried independent exhibition organized by the Seinen Bijutsuka Rengo. In Bito's hometown of Akabane, many repatriates from the continent and war victims lived in buildings formerly used to store ammunition, and the town was also home to a weapons factory under direct control of the US military. The painting depicts workers walking home from the factory, their mouths tightly closed, against the backdrop of a landscape with a disturbingly vivid contrast between the dark sky that hangs over the factory and the orange of the red-clay plateau. Nakamura meanwhile in 1955 covered the "Sunagawa Struggle" campaign to stop expansion of the US military base in Tachikawa. In 5th Sunagawa a clash between local opponents of the base and police extends exquisitely across a panoramic picture plane in film-like fashion, with an almost uncanny immediacy that draws the viewer right in. ASAKURA Setsu (1922-2014) also made numerous sketching trips to coal mines, kiln sites, and fishing villages throughout Japan in the 1950s with fellow artists, and produced many works featuring those working in these places. In this way, young artists directly confronted the difficult reality of postwar Japan, and tackled its various issues within the field of painting.

In 1957, following discussions among members of the Seinen Bijutsuka Rengo, at a time when Japanese nationals could not yet travel freely overseas Bito was sent to the World Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow (NAKANO Jun, who is introduced in the next section, was

3. Walking in Kiyosumi-Shirakawa

Fukagawa, Kiba, Kiyosumi-Shirakawa—This chapter sheds light on the artists who walked around the area where the museum is located.

NAKANO Jun (1925-2017) had deepened his friendship with MATSUMOTO Shunsuke after being greatly impressed by his work Canal View, which he saw at the Shinjin Gakai (Association of New Painters) exhibition that was held in Ginza during the war. In 1948, Nakano became the youngest member of the Jiyu Bijutsu Kyokai (Association of Free Artists) and soon relocated from Tokyo's downtown area where he was born and raised, to the Suginami district. Painted more than 10 years after the war by the artist who had once witnessed many deaths caused by air raids while walking along the Sumida River, the 'downtown' series attempts to depict the "miserable postwar period" through images of the "polluted river," while overlaying such landscapes with his "pure childhood memories*." In the 1970s, he completed a series of landscape paintings of the Fukagawa-Kiba area as the culmination of this endeavor. In "Downtown Sketches," he walked along the canal regardless of the weather or season, and used tools such as pen and brush to preserve the memories of landscapes that were disappearing as a result of urban planning and the relocation of the canal to Shin-Kiba. The center of the hand-drawn map that he produced at the time was Kiba, which exactly coincides with the location of the park where the museum now stands.

"MOT Satellite (2017-2020)," planned in line with MOT's large-scale renovation, is a serial project that was inspired by the idea to connect with the area immediately surrounding the museum, which continues to bustle with liveliness and new energy while preserving the downtown atmosphere and waterfront landscape. Works that were acquired in correspondence to this project are presented for the first time in the MOT collection exhibition. Wataridori Keikaku (formed in 2008) is a project by Tomoko Aso (1982-) and Akiko Takeuchi (1983-), who travel around Japan like migratory birds (wataridori) in pursuit of warmth and food. Preparations for "MOT Satellite 2020" (postponed to the following year), which marked the final installment of the project, were precisely underway amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and thus the two artists can be seen wearing masks in their work, Hand-colored Journey Postcards. It was due to such circumstances that the artists, upon visiting the Fukagawa area, had as usual captured the most impressive sceneries and experiences made while traveling around, in formats as varied as paintings, pottery, video works, and karuta (Japanese playing cards). MITSUSHIMA Takayuki (1954-) who completely lost his sight at the age of 10, depicts landscapes perceived through sensory measures such as touch, sound, smell, and object perception in threedimensional form. From the very trajectory of his walk

expressed though lines of thin nails hammered onto wooden panels, to the gravel in Kiyosumi Garden that he felt beneath his feet, the voices of children, the bicycles passing by, and the time he spent in stores—we, through our fingertips, are able to tactilely trace, like a picture scroll, the route from the Kiyosumi-Shirakawa station to the museum that Mitsushima had experienced, KUSANAGI Shimpei (1973-), when providing the serial illustrations for MIYAMOTO Teru's novel (2007-2012) set in the Kiyosumi-Shirakawa area, learned that "Kiyosumi-Shirakawa" was a new station name created in 2000 and does not exist as the name of an actual town or street. As a result of this discovery, Kusanagi came to regard painting, like the name of this station, to be as a "translucent intermediary realm that straddles between reality and unreality, both in name and in substance**." The large paintings, with their many layers of pale colors, are like screens onto which the scenes that exist in people's memories and fantasies are delicately projected.

* NAKANO Jun, Gaka tachi no Showa: Watashi no Gadan Koryu-Ki (Showa Through the Eyes of Painters: Chronicles of My Interactions in the Art World),
Chuokoron-Shinsha, 2018

* * KUSANAGI Shinpei, Kiyosumi kaiwai [Kiyosumi and its Environs], Kyuryudo Art Publishing, 2013 of stops Kurita collected a pinch of earth, stuck it onto a scenic postcard, and posted it back to his home in Yamanashi, "an act of superimposing upon each other my own life, the expanse of the planet, and an Asian-style spiritual space" in which a work of art was born out of his travels.* The antecedent of Kurita's "Soil Library Project," in which noting the beauty of the earth beneath his feet, he collected soil from various places in Japan he visited, PIECES OF THE EARTH could be described as harboring movement on two levels: the journey of Kurita, for whom physicality in his practice is foundational, and the transport by post of the soil he gathered.

Also in this section are Sea Change, by Anthony CARO (1924–2013), who opened up new horizons in contemporary sculpture during the 1960s with works in vibrantly-colored steel, and in this case was inspired by a piece of writing on the sea penned by novelist James Joyce; and the "CARO by ANZAi" photos taken by ANZAI Shigeo (1939–2020) who traveled around recording Caro's works. Put yourself in the shoes and behind the eyes of these artists as you take in the plethora of intriguing works on display here.

*HORI Shinkichi, "Souvenir of the soul," Art '91, Maria Shobo, 1991, p. 73.

4. Walking and Moving Around the World

This section introduces works produced by artists from the 1960s and 1970s, as well as contemporary artists, as part of their travels around the world.

KUBOTA Shigeko (1937-2015), who moved to the United States in 1964 and joined the Fluxus movement, started working with video in around 1970 when she began living with Nam June Paik. In 1972 she acquired a Portapak, shoulder-mounted portable video camera, and began making autobiographical videos that would later be compiled into her Broken Diary works. In the production of her early works, she carried the heavy video equipment on her shoulder and traveled to various countries in Europe and to Arizona, immersing herself in different cultures. Video Girls and Video Songs for Navajo Sky, documents Kubota's visit to the Navajo Native American reservation in Arizona, family home of Cecilia Sandoval, a member of the women's group Red, White, Yellow & Black with whom she performed live events. Kubota stayed with matriarchal Navajos, witnessing scenes such as the slaughter of sheepsfor the first time in her life, and conversing with the women, all the while keeping her camera rolling. At the beginning and end of the video, large colored silhouettes of Kubota's face appear in succession, overlapping black-and-white footage of the Navajo people, enabling the presence of the artist herself, who does not make an appearance in the footage despite having lived and experienced the lives of these people, to emerge like a vivid afterimage.

PIECES OF THE EARTH by KURITA Koichi (b. 1962) began with a 500-day journey by the artist in 1988 that involved traveling to China by sea, traversing the Taklamakan Desert, then making his way through Pakistan, India, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East to Greece. At a number

5. Artworks Born From Movement

Presented thus far have been works created by artists as they walked through cities and nature, and moved around the world. This section introduces works by Olafur ELIASSON (b. 1967) in which movement/transportation itself is documented with no involvdmdng from the artist's hands or body.

Since the 1990s, the Icelandic-Danish artist has produced numerous sculptures that use color and light to interrogate mechanisms of perception, and experiential installations that reconstruct natural phenomena, instilling in us new sensations and encouraging awareness of the environment and world we live in. Founded in 1995, Studio Olafur Eliason consists of a diverse staff of craftsmen, architects, art historians, designers, cooks, technicians, and various other professionals, who collaborate on a daily basis to experiment, research, and produce artworks. In recent years the studio has increasingly turned its attention to environmental issues, and is endeavoring to replace its activities with more sustainable options and approaches.

Also envisioning a future more sustainable existence, the solo exhibition, "Olafur Eliasson: Sometimes the river is the bridge," held at MOT in 2020, was conceived with the intent to present a "potential shift in perspective" that could help us "reconsider the traditional idea of progress." The artist and studio turned a critical eye on the very structure of creating an exhibition, and instead of transporting the artworks by air as per convention, decided to use surface transport via land and sea: by truck from Berlin to Hamburg, by rail through Poland to Russia and China, and then by boat to Japan. In Memories from the critical zone (Germany-Poland-Russia-China-Japan), this "move," which serves to reduce the carbon footprint of transportation and symbolizes the effort

to address climate change, itself becomes works of art.* A drawing machine was installed in each shipping crate, in which a ballpoint pen held by a mechanical arm moved over the surface of the paper in response to the vibrations and tilting of the crate during transport. As a result, the trajectory of this two-month journey is replaced by visual records that take shape as a series of abstract line drawings.

Beyond-human resonator, on display for the first time in a MOT Collection exhibition, bends, reflects and diffracts the light of LEDs through the lens of a lighthouse radiating light onto a dark sea to create large, vibrantly colored concentric circles on the gallery wall. By rendering visible the optical trick of creating a painting of concentric circles using tiny lights, the work shares with the viewer Eliasson's gaze, extending through light to our planet and its environment, and urges them toward new thoughts and realizations.

*The critical zone refers to the surface of the earth which is shaped by the complex interaction of atmosphere, water, soil, and living organisms.

6. Walking and Flights of Imagination/Creation

This final section focuses on the works of artists who were interned in Europe during World War II, as well as a contemporary artist who uses books as their source material, shedding light on their imaginative/creative journeys.

SUEMATSU Masaki (1908-97) was fascinated by Neue Tanz, an avant-garde dance form born in Germany after World War I, which he encountered in a film he saw at the age of 19. After moving to Tokyo in 1933, he studied at the first Neue Tanz studio in Japan and developed a passion for dance, although at one point briefly helping at a design company in Ginza, where FUJIMAKI Yoshio also worked for a time. Suematsu hoped to remain in Europe after the outbreak of World War II, and took a position at the consulate in Marseille. However, the Allied Forces soon attacked, and he was arrested and imprisoned as an enemy combatant in the city of Perpignan on the border with Spain, a neutral country to which he was trying to escape. Although he was later able to relocate to a hotel, he spent a year and a half under house arrest. During this time, Suematsu used pencil on paper to repeatedly depict images of people dancing in groups. In these hundreds of drawings, numerous lines, likely drawn while imagining the free movements of the body, appear to dance across the picture plane. Despite restrictions on movement, Suematsu's life in Perpignan, where he continued to dance and venture forward through drawing, became a solid foundation for him to develop his activities as an abstract painter upon his return to Japan.

FUKUDA Naoyo (1967-) is an artist who has been creating works related to words and text, using books and mail as materials. Fukuda, was familiar with books from a young age, and mentions that until becoming an adult she was "unable to sleep without opening the pages of Jules Verne's Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas every night." In producing her work, she cuts out the pages of these treasured books that she had read over and over again, passing a needle through the paper to string together a series of small knots with embroidery thread. One could say that creating such work is equivalent to the loss of the book as a

reading material. However, letting the soft thread pass back and forth through the book/text, enables her to come into direct contact with the world of the book that she had fantasized about when reading. By "following the meandering brushstrokes deeper and deeper, while interrupted by the scenes that the words contain, * Fukuda orchestrates a unique moment of creation in which she becomes one with the books—the innumerable succession of which appear before our eyes like small "green moss growing within a hollow*."

In this way, just as we actually go on journeys to walk, move, and encounter unknown things in the world, it is possible to open new horizons at any time by walking and taking flight through our own imagination.

* FUKUDA Naoyo, Hikari Hokori no Kimi: Bijutsu to Kaibun: Selection from the Essential Works of Naoyo Fukuda, Heibonsha, 2018

7. 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.

8. 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 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 Farmanfarmian 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.

9. The camera eye of Matsue Taiji

Rows of large-format landscape photos line the walls, every inch in laser-sharp focus; their only titles the location, indicating where they were shot, and a serial number. The date of production: all the same year. The 26 photographs displayed in this room were hand-picked by their creator MATSUE Taiji (b. 1963) from a vast portfolio amassed in decades of traveling around the globe. In making his selections, Matsue also considered how they would work in combination. For this artist, the date of production is the date when a print is made of the photo.

Matsue says that for him, the production process here has

been about assembling geographical names. To date he has given his photo collections of natural features such as forests, mountain ranges, plains, and deserts the appellation "gazetteer," while those series in which he has collected cities, based on the international codes used to identify place names, are referred to as "CC" (City Code), but the fact that the two are the same in substance, and crafted using the same techniques, is emphasized by the deliberately random arrangement here.

On closer inspection the geographical names attached to the photos vary in terms of unit: some are a country, some a code used for a city, some the name of a mountain range or region. All the photos are the same size, but when consciously viewed in order of the size of what is captured in them, one notices that the distance from the landscape subject differs with each work, as if zooming in and out with a camera. The camera eye of Matsue, surveying the world, treats all the elements that make up its subjects as equal in value, even if the sense of distance is occasionally altered.

Landscapes rendered two-dimensionally as all-over picture planes by composition devoid of horizons offer not a whiff of narrative, or dramatization. Though at first the images appear abstracted, to scrutinize the finer details is to be drawn inexorably deep into the resolution, due to the sheer volume of information unable to be grasped instantaneously. One cannot help but notice that order and wildness are to be found in both nature and city.

10. Gazing on the invisible

Maya WATANABE (b. 1983) was born in Peru, and is currently based in The Netherlands. An artist who has spent her career offering insights into the singularity of life and death common to all living things, including human beings, in the video installation *Liminal* she focuses on and investigates the political turmoil of her homeland from 1980 to 2000, the true extent of the harm from which has yet to come to light.

Subjects left fuzzy in closeup are linked to memories and physicality rendered invisible by history and social pressure. The elusiveness of the complete picture, out of focus, is perhaps connected to past events in Peru, and the difficulty of discerning their true nature. The giant screen envelops our field of vision as if inviting us into memories of a past in a faraway place, and encourages us to imagine what lies beyond.

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