

Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo

## Kenjiro Okazaki 而今而後 Time Unfolding Here

April 29 – July 21, 2025

The Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo is pleased to present a large-scale, in-depth survey of the work of Kenjiro Okazaki (b. 1955), one of Japan’s leading contemporary artists.

Innovative not only in painting and sculpture, but also in a wide range of fields including architecture, environmental cultural sphere initiative, children’s books, and robotics, Okazaki has also been active as a culture critic. At the root is his conception and practice of *zōkei*\* (plastic arts) as a force that reconnects our perception and the world.

With scientific and technological innovations such as Artificial Intelligence, environmental crises, and political chaos, the world and social institutions as we have known them seem to be rapidly losing their validity. Is the world falling apart?

In response to this question, Okazaki asserts that it is not the world but our perception that is in turmoil. For him, *zōkei* is the force that transforms the very framework for our perception of the world. In other words, it is about releasing the malleability of the world by changing our perception of it, as well as restoring that same quality to perception through concrete engagement with the world. According to him, *zōkei* is about reconnecting these two types of malleability through practice.

The exhibition will provide a comprehensive overview of the work of the artist, who has recently received increasing international recognition. Focusing on the latest output since 2021—a year that marked a major turn in his career—the show will also feature key works from the earlier periods.

—The world continues to be reborn, again and again. From now and later.

\* The Japanese term refers to the act of shaping or creating forms, including “zōkei geijutsu,” “plastic arts.” The “plastic” in this last English word also alludes to the capability of being molded or shaped into different forms, as in “plasticity.”



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## Exhibition Highlights

### 1. A Comprehensive Survey of One of Japan's Leading Artists

A large-scale presentation of Okazaki's work, developed in multiple media from painting to sculpture to architecture, since he first attracted attention in the early 1980s with his "Akasakamitsuke" sculpture series. Teaching, critical writing, robot construction, environmental cultural sphere initiative... This exhibition offers a broad overview of Okazaki's work, difficult to grasp in its entirety due to the radical inventiveness he has achieved through his superhuman intelligence in each of these fields, with a focus on the overarching theme of zōkei (form-making).



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Reference:

Kenjiro Okazaki "Nakatsukuni Park Tabusa Rice Field" (Soryocho), 2007 (Photographed in 2021)

09



Reference:

Kenjiro Okazaki

Left) *T.T.T.Bot (Turning Table Tripod Robot)*, 2015

Right) "若草／二八十一不在國・kusa", "若草／二八十一不在國・kawa", "巻きそめ／二八十一不在國・hama", "巻きそめ／二八十一不在國・kiji", "手枕／二八十一不在國・tama", "手枕／二八十一不在國・kura",

2019 | Each: 41.3×56.5cm (6 pieces) | Acrylic, paper Photo: Shu Nakagawa



## 2. An Extensive Presentation of the Artist's Latest Production Since 2021

“而今而後” (lit. “Now and hereafter”; “Time Unfolding Here”) in the show's title is a quotation from the Analects of Confucius. Since 2021, Okazaki Kenjiro says that the time-space framework of his thinking has been undergoing a major turn amid a double change in society and his own personal experience. The exhibition will feature around 100 new and recent works by the artist, who has since been in a period of great productivity.



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## Kenjiro Okazaki

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Kenjiro Okazaki (b. 1955) is a Japanese plastic artist whose works span over several genres, including painting, sculpture, as well as landscape and architecture. Many of his works have been featured in public collections throughout Japan and in various exhibitions around the world. In 2002, Okazaki was selected as the director of the Japanese pavilion of the International Architecture Exhibition in Venice Biennale. His works include a collaborative performance 'I Love my Robot' with the choreographer Trisha Brown, premiered in early 2007. He received Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship at Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (HMSG) in 2014.

Major solo exhibitions include *Kenjiro Okazaki - Retrospective Strata* (Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, 2019-2020) and *ART TODAY 2002 Kenjiro Okazaki* (Sezon Museum of Modern Art). He also exhibited his major works at Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo in 2009 (*MOT Collection "Special feature: Kenjiro Okazaki"*).

He is also extremely active as a critic, and is the author of several books, including *Jikonjigo: Hihyo no atosaki: Okazaki Kenjiro Hihyo Senshu vol. 2* [而今而後 批評のあとさき(岡崎乾二郎批評選集 vol.2)], *Jikonjigo: Here After Critique: Collection of Critical Essays vol.2* (Akishobo, 2024), *Atamano uewo nanikaga* [頭のうえを何かが, *One Passed Over Head*] (Nanarokusha Publishing, 2023), *Kaiganomoto: Topica Pictus* [絵画の素 TOPICA PICTUS] (Iwanami Shoten, Publishers, 2022), *Topica Pictus* (urizen, 2020) and *Renaissance: Keiken no Joken* [ルネサンス 経験の条件, *Renaissance: Condition of Experience*] (Chikuma Shobo, 2001/Bungeishunju Gakugei Library, 2014). He received the Ministry of Education Award in Fine Arts for *Chusho no chikara: kindageijutsu no kaiseki* [抽象の力 近代芸術の解析, *The Analysis of Modern Art: Abstract Art as Impact*] (Akishobo, 2018) in 2019 and the Mainichi Publishing Culture Award for *Kankaku no eden: Okazaki Kenjiro Hihyo Senshu vol. 1* [感覚のエデン(岡崎乾二郎批評選集 vol.1), *Sensorial Eden: Collection of Critical Essays vol.1*] (Akishobo, 2021) in 2022.



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## Information

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|-------------------|---|
| Exhibition Title  | Kenjiro Okazaki 而今而後 Time Unfolding Here  |
| Exhibition Period | Tuesday, April 29 – Monday, July 21, 2025   |
| Opening Hours     | 10 AM – 6 PM (Tickets available until 30 minutes before closing.)   |
| Closed            | Mondays (except May 5 and Jul 21), May 7  |
| Venue             | Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Exhibition Gallery 1F/3F  |
| Admission         | Adults – 2,000 yen / University & College Students, Over 65 – 1,400 yen / High School & Junior High School Students – 800 yen / Elementary School Students & Younger – free |
| Organized by      | Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo operated by Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture  |
| Inquiries         | 03-5245-4111 (main line)  |
| Curated by        | Tomoko Yabumae (Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo)  |

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\*All Programs are subject to change.

## Also on View

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- MOT Plus Soundwalk Collective & Patti Smith: CORRESPONDENCES / April 26 (Sat) – June 29 (Sun)
- MOT Plus Collaboration with Han Nefkens Foundation: Shahana Rajani / April 29 (Tues/Hol.) – June 29 (Sun)
- MOT Collection / April 29 (Tues/Hol.) – July 21 (Mon/Hol.)

## Publicity Images

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\*Reference images may only be provided to certain media

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## Credit lines



01

Kenjiro Okazaki

*Heads poking out, a shape with lion body and man's head. A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun. Embankment crowded, a vast image troubles my sight. Everyone shouting, voices affectionate, half-crying. We're all gonna die. Darkness drops again. I heard ducks floating.*

*Black rocks absorbed light. Was I all along born on the far shore? Cave pitch dark. Colors fade. Stretch out a hand. World already ended.*

*Spread legs. Never to perish again. Only a presence – the subtle movement of air as someone searched. Solely ephemeral presence lingers. I remember who I am.*

*Earthquake shook. Sun black as sackcloth. Moon like blood. Stars fell to earth, fig tree dropping unripe fruit. Sky split apart, mountains and islands moved. Kings, slaves shouted, "Hide us from the throne, from the Lamb's wrath." Their day has come. I'm gonna faint!*

2024 | 260.6 × 268.2 cm | Acrylic, canvas

Photo: Shu Nakagawa





02

Kenjiro Okazaki

*"What secrets lie within!" Moon pearls crowned garden walls. "Look how shadows dance!" Hark, Wind whispered phantom tales. "Stars sang memories deep. " "Time weaves silver dreams!" she shouted joyfully, "He lives!" And from the mountains the echo came back upon her, "he lives!"*

*"Is the spring coming?" Dawn mist cloaked emerald hills. "Do you have a garden?" Roses climbed ancient walls. "What makes the grass grow?" Rain whispered to the earth. "Where do old tales rest?" Time slept in shadows where moorland flowers bloom and fade.*

2024 | 208.0×117.0 cm | Acrylic, canvas

Photo: Shu Nakagawa



03

Kenjiro Okazaki

*But in truth, the first creatures were driven from the sea. They fled. That's why so many of us get seasick. A mudskipper crawled onto the beach, raising its head.*

*"Look," he said, beholding the vast expanse. "Thousands of miles of flat nothing." Fish swim through water endlessly; no end to the water they swim. Birds fly through sky ceaselessly; no end to the sky they fly.*

*There is no reason. We skipped the light fandango, though in truth we were at sea. She said, "I'm home" leaving for the coast.*

*Darkness covered the empty earth; The Spirit hovered over waters. Let there be waters teeming with life, birds multiplying on earth. All that moves in sea and sky, each according to its kind, merely drifted through the world. Evening fell, then dawn broke.*

2024 | 182.0×260.7 cm | Acrylic, canvas

Photo: Shu Nakagawa



04

Kenjiro Okazaki

*《耳を押し当てその向こうの気配を探る。ベールは柔らかな髪を作って、顔に落ち、神秘的で触れられない何かを感じさせる。花嫁のベールほど美しいものはない、透明で儂く脆いのは純粹だから。次の日、彼女は花嫁のベールを買いに行った。*

*雨が降れば夏になる。丘の頂から湖が見えた。夏はどこにいるのだろうか。見晴らしてもすべては春のまま。スマイルの花びらは雨を欲して萎れ、身を窄めていた。*

*何週もの遅れを取り戻そうと冷たい春のあと、暑い夏が慌てて訪れる。リネンの清らかな香りは婚礼のための白い布の束、仕上げのアイロンがけを待っている。*

*石畳の街に、太陽が降り注いでも石は決して花に変わらず、白壁の家が緑に覆われるわけでもない。太陽は街のあちこちの小さな公園にただ夏の装いをさせる。夏は公園の芝生にも自由に伸びることを許さず、いつも短く刈り揃えられていた。》*

2024 | 224.0×363.5 cm | Acrylic, canvas

Photo: Shu Nakagawa



05

Kenjiro Okazaki

*Examine The Tone And Reasoning Too; Consider The face, How It Changes Hue/ 聆音 察理, 鑒貌辨色*

2024 | 59.0 × 47.0 × 38.0 cm | Synthetic marble | OKETA COLLECTION

Photo: Shu Nakagawa



06

Kenjiro Okazaki

*The Salt Of The Sea, Rivers Fresh, Scales Lurking Below, Wings Soaring Above/ 鹹河淡 鱗潛羽翔*

2024 | 89.7 × 118.9 × 108.4 cm | Synthetic marble



07

Kenjiro Okazaki

*Akasakamitsuke*

1981 | 27.5 × 25.0 × 17.5 cm | Acrylic, polyethylene | Takamatsu City Museum of Art

Photo: Shu Nakagawa



08

Kenjiro Okazaki

*Early Now, But Will Be Late*

1986 | 224.0 × 176.0 cm | Cotton cloth, silk | Ohara Museum of Art, Ohara Art Foundation, Kurashiki



09

Kenjiro Okazaki

*The little village on the far mountainside was already out of sight, and spring was coming around again. The grape trees were like large ailing snakes creeping under the coping stones of the wall. A brown light moved about in the tepid air. The void created by the selfsame every day is likely to chop down even the young trees that were left behind. In this everyday life, a thicket of trees protrudes like a boulder. (Left)*

*The village I lived in has never been thought of as so small. The sun showed itself. The tall poplar forest looks like a beach being blown about by the wind. I grow dizzy just watching that seamless succession. If I can manage to get drunk on the succession of unchanging days, I can also grow to feel like I have taken down an elephant or snake. He differentiated things this way, like a fluttering butterfly. (Right)*

2002 | Each 180.0×130.0 cm (Set of two) | Acrylic, canvas | Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo

Photo: Ichiro Otani



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Photo: Risaku Suzuki