



Yutaka Kikutake Gallery

Group Exhibition *Whispers in the Wholeness*

Kineta Kunimatsu, Nanami Saito, Yoshitomo Nara, Hokuto Watanabe, BOTAN & sumire

November 2 (Sat) - December 21(Sat), 2024

Yutaka Kikutake Gallery is pleased to announce the opening of our second gallery space, this one located in TODA BUILDING in Kyobashi, Tokyo. Yutaka Kikutake Gallery first opened its doors in 2015 and concurrently began publishing the lifestyle culture magazine 疾駆/chic. Our aim was, and still is, to combine everyday values with wisdom accumulated through art and culture. In the 7 years since we formally launched our gallery program, we implemented an educational program called Art Club. This program, organized in collaboration with 疾駆/chic, places particular focus on consistently providing workshops for children. These efforts reflect our gallery's conviction that art can inspire people to lead richer lives, and that providing spaces for immediate, shared interactions with artwork can create opportunities to affirm the diversity that exists in the world around us.

With the opening of this new space in Kyobashi, we took the opportunity to consult with Yoshitomo Nara about our first exhibition. Nara's work reflects a genuine fidelity to his own expressive vision while simultaneously demonstrating a refusal to be constrained by preconceived notions in his constant search for new modes of production. The sheer force of conviction behind his work is a constant source of insight. When he curated the group show Youth at our Roppongi gallery space in 2021, Nara organized an innovative installation of work from artists spanning nationalities and generations. We look back on that exhibition as a source of energy that brought an invigorating perspective to our lives and attitudes during the global pandemic. If our previous programs can be thought of as the trunk of a tree, then we envision the Kyobashi gallery as a space where the branches and leaves of that tree can further expand to encompass activities with a deliberate eye on the future. When we explained this to Nara, he responded by saying that he would like to organize an exhibition of artists who locate their practices in the natural world. These artists draw inspiration from the natural world in their respective efforts to express the existence of a timeless, universal presence.

It gives us great pleasure to announce that from Saturday, November 2nd to Saturday, December

21st, Yoshitomo Nara will be participating in a group exhibition entitled The Whispering Forest of All Gentle Things with works from 4 other artists he met during his recent travels to Hokkaido. Serving as a conduit to the spirituality residing in the natural world, this exhibition will reveal the noble pursuit of timeless, universal forms within the space of the gallery.

Based in Shiraoi, Hokkaido, Kineta Kunimatsu utilizes local materials to transpose the lines and contours he encounters during his frequent investigations into his natural surroundings into a range of material forms. For this exhibition, Kunimatsu will be presenting wood carvings brimming with the formal beauty and physical sensations inherent in the natural world. Nanami Saito presents ceramic work developed around the mythologies that arise at the boundary between the human and natural worlds. Using her own body as a starting point, Saito's work for this show also uses trees and rocks as a means of interrogating the boundary between human life and the wild. Yoshitomo Nara will be presenting a series of drawings he made during his stay this summer in a town on the shores of Lake Toya, one of his bases for his practice in recent years. These drawings not only provoke the free-flowing imagination of the viewer through their depiction of what appear to be spirits from the natural world, but also function as reference points for the exhibition as a whole. Hokuto Watanabe, a cattle farmer in Betsukai, Hokkaido, began making wooden figurines of gods from the North to fulfill his spiritual needs. As his work developed, he began to create his own unique figurines inspired by Hokkaido myths and fairytales. His pieces in this show are like storytellers who describe a profound dialogue between humans and the accumulated results of history and nature. BOTAN & sumire are based in Hakodate and use plants in their artistic practice to create spatial compositions and installation pieces. Using plants that have reclaimed abandoned spaces resulting from depopulation, this artist duo creates installations that bring plants back into human spaces and provide a site where the life forces of both entities can interact.

Nature, born from the ceaseless cycle of life, is filled with vibrations and gentle murmurs that can only be perceived from within. In a way, this can be thought of as its own kind of universal existence. By immersing ourselves in nature, we open ourselves up to the possibility of new insights and surprises, and perhaps are able to discover a path to the universality inherent in ourselves. In this way, this exhibition is a fitting guidepost for the long-term vision of the gallery. We look forward to

welcoming you to the show.

【Exhibiting Artist Information】

Kineta Kunimatsu

Born in Hokkaido in 1977, Kunimatsu graduated from Tama Art University's Department of Sculpture. Since 2022, he has based his artistic production at Tobiu Art Community in Shiraoi, Hokkaido. In recent years, Kunimatsu's sculpture, painting, and installation work has focused on the various outlines (boundaries) existing in the natural world in the form of horizon lines, mountain ranges, and caves. At the same time, he has continued his work as part of Ayoro Laboratory (since 2015), conducting fieldwork in the Ayoro area, and as member of THE SNOWFLAKES (since 2020), an artist collective formed at Tobiu Art Community.

Nanami Saito

Born in Osaka in 1996, Saito obtained her master's degree from the Department of Intermedia Art at Tokyo University of the Arts. In 2023, she attended the Glasgow School of Art as an exchange student. Using ceramics and metals, Saito creates sculptural work that crosses the boundary between the natural and artificial worlds. Her practice questions whether there are any completely natural places left in this day and age, and reflects doubts about the distance and relationship between the natural and the artificial. This attitude is reflected in her fieldwork on Yakushima which she utilized to create The Forest, a series of sculptures based on the trees of the island, as well as the work for this exhibition which utilizes pest control netting.

Yoshitomo Nara

Born in Hirosaki, Aomori in 1959, Nara completed his master's degree at Aichi Prefectural University of the Arts in 1987 before enrolling in the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in Germany in 1988. At the heart of Nara's work is the search for a society different from our current one in terms of production and distribution systems, attitudes surrounding work, and the accumulation of wealth. His work has (see Mika Kuraya's essay

Yoshitomo Nara: SELF-SELECTED Works—Paintings (2015)), and opens up important perspectives that go beyond the history of art. While constantly creating distance between the here

and now, his work actively accepts the challenge of illuminating the present. At the same time, Nara's artistic practice continues to develop an undeniable resonance with viewers and earn unparalleled critical acclaim.

Hokuto Watanabe

Watanabe is an artist working in wood who also runs a cattle farm called Ururi located in Betsukai, Hokkaido. During the farming off-season, he utilizes folk art techniques in his artistic practice. One of the major creative inspirations for his work are the wooden sewa dolls of the Uilta people, an ethnic minority living in Hokkaido and Sakhalin, Russia. Just as the word "sewa" means god or spirit, Watanabe imbues his creations with mysterious awkwardness and a spiritual charm. His works, which share a common worldview and narrative, have been attracting attention in recent years.

BOTAN & sumire

BOTAN & sumire live in Hakodate, Hokkaido. They both create work using plants collected from their surroundings. BOTAN creates spatial installations using the plants themselves, while sumire uses the colors from the plants to create works on cloth and canvas. Ever since BOTAN closed his flower shop in 2022, he has expanded the focus of his daily outdoor activities from flowers to the wide variety of plants that overflow in both natural and urban environments, centering his practice on observing the relationship between people and plants. sumire began dyeing in 2022, actively using plants that flourish in urban environments and flowering plants that are normally weeded out. In addition to fabric-on-panel works created through a unique dyeing method resulting from numerous experiments, sumire also collaborates with BOTAN to create three-dimensional works using the leftover material generated during the production of her other work.