

Press release

CURATION ⇄ FAIR

Exhibition 1 – 16 February 2025
Art fair 22 – 24 February 2025
Venue kudan house (1-15-9 Kudanshita, Chuo-ku, Tokyo)

We are pleased to announce the second edition of CURATION ⇄ FAIR, held at kudan house, a distinct modern architectural space symbolizing Japan's evolving identity amid modernization and adaptation to foreign influences. Set against this unique backdrop, CURATION ⇄ FAIR will feature a dual program: an exhibition and an art fair, held consecutively at the same venue. This year, the event expands with three exhibitions in different areas of kudan house, curated by Mizuki Endo, Hikotaro Kanehira and Tomoya Iwata respectively, along with satellite exhibitions and talk programs to further enrich the experience.

CURATION ⇄ FAIR delves into the often overlooked lineage of Japanese aesthetics, from long-revered Asian antiquities to modern movements born out of periods of dramatic social transformation, to contemporary art and crafts that resonate with our lives today. We aim to offer a fresh perspective on Japan's artistic heritage—one that transcends mainstream market trends. Additionally, we are committed to discovering and nurturing emerging artists whose works reflect these deeply rooted traditions, elevating their value to a wider audience.

The event offers an introspective experience that not only enhances appreciation for the inherent beauty of art but also deepens understanding of its historical and cultural significance, and provides a reliable platform for making informed art purchases from the finest galleries.

[Exhibition]

The Beautiful, the Ambiguous, and Itself
Pocket full of sparks
Sandglass flowing backward

Curated by Mizuki Endo
Curated by Hikotaro Kanehira
Curated by Tomoya Iwata

[Art fair] List of Exhibitors

ANOMALY
HAGIWARA PROJECTS
Gallery Hirota Fine Art
KANEGAE <KOGEI Next>
KAYOKOYUKI
KOKI ARTS
Tomio Koyama Gallery
London Gallery
MA2Gallery
MISAKO & ROSEN
MUJIN-TO Production

NAKACHO KONISHI
TARO NASU
Satoko Oe Contemporary
Shibuya Kuroda Toen Co., Ltd.
gallery shirushi
Shunsei Gallery
TOKYO GALLERY + BTAP
Wa.gallery
WAITINGROOM
Oriental Fine Arts Yanagi

Organizer: Universal Ad Network Co., Ltd.
curation-fair.com info@curation-fair.com

The Beautiful, the Ambiguous, and Itself

Curator: Mizuki Endo

If it can exist as a piece of art, then perhaps I too can exist as a human being.
While the decision is not mine to make, it appears the world strongly wishes it to be so.

Upon winning the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1968, Yasunari Kawabata delivered a lecture titled “Japan, the Beautiful, and Myself”. When Kenzaburo Oe became the second Japanese person after Kawabata to win the same prize 26 years later, he followed this motif and titled his lecture “Japan, the Ambiguous, and Myself”.

This exhibition, “The Beautiful, the Ambiguous, and Itself”, combines the titles of both lectures while omitting “Japan” and “Myself”, to step away from the realm of words surrounding what being from “Japan” and being “Myself” express. While such discussions about Japan's uniqueness by Japanese individuals often lead to naive conclusions, I wish to explore new paths that navigate beyond the constraints of identity politics.

“Japan, the Beautiful, and Myself” and “Japan, the Ambiguous, and Myself” have been published and are acclaimed for their insightful discussions on Japan. However, a kind of contradiction can be found between the two. When simplified, Kawabata's depiction of Japan aligns with familiar traditional themes such as intentional spaces, wabi-sabi [transience and imperfection] and a view of nature void of subject-object relationships. In contrast, Oe views Japan as a subject fragmented by modernity, compelled to confront numerous geopolitical contradictions.

Although this might be stretching the point somewhat, it may be possible to use the contrast between Kawabata's and Oe's views of Japan to paraphrase the contrast between antique art and modern/contemporary art of Japan. While neither Kawabata nor Oe explicitly aimed for this comparison, their perspectives resonate with the dynamics that define these art categories. Furthermore, their interpretations of Japan could even be considered as a basis for assigning value, an approach rooted in impermanence and wabi-sabi, alongside meaningful engagement with conflicts arising from Western modernity; in other words, the beautiful Japan and the ambiguous Japan.

This exhibition radically questions the nature of art from a standpoint far removed from the typical concepts of “Japan” and “myself”. It consciously avoids attributing the works' origins to either Japan or the artists, focusing instead on the phenomenon of their very existence as art, and on a series of sensory experiences that are relevant to the specific time and place, distinct from doctrinal information or the reaffirmation of predefined values. Beauty and ambiguity cannot be reduced to the artist, era, or the place; nor are they something that only a select few can appreciate. They exist beyond trends, sophisticated theories, market values, or perhaps even personal sensibilities. It is not humanity, but the autonomy of the object itself that ensures our equality and freedom. After all, this is what art has always been—something that resonates purely as itself.

Exhibits: Toshio Arimoto, Stephan Balkenhol, Josh Brand, Seiji Chokai, Miho Dohi, Takeji Fujishima, Shuta Hasunuma, Ikezaki Takuya, Genichiro Inokuma, *Karatsu vessel*, Yasunari Kawabata, Kanjiro Kawai, Sachiko Kazama, Yasuo Kazuki, Kim Keun Tai, Mami Kosemura, Taiji Matsue, Saori Miyake, Tomonari Nakayashiki, Ryoho Otake, *Seated Male Deity*, Naoko Sekine, Daichi Takagi, Toeko Tatsuno, Masanori Tomita, Isao Uemae, *Vessel*, *Tang Sancai*, *White Porcelain Jar*

Pocket full of sparks

Curator: Hikotaro Kanehira

In the basement of kudan house (formerly the Yamaguchi Mankichi Residence), a space that transforms dramatically between day and night, artists have spent time immersing themselves in the environment, carefully considering where to place their works—or where to leave gaps and silences. They have approached the exhibition with a sensitivity to balance, allowing both the space and its emptiness to play an active role. The interplay between light streaming through basement windows during the day and shadows enveloping the space at night offers a viewing experience that shifts with time. While writing this, I can only vaguely imagine how the works will come together as a whole, I trust the magic woven by the artists will far surpass my expectations.

Ryoko Aoki's video work, built up through layers of organic drawings, invites viewers into the depths of consciousness. Maureen Gallace presents small drawings for her equally modest-sized paintings that reflect her introspective landscapes, while Hiroshi Sugito rearranges sketches and small sculptures from his studio, exploring how their placement transforms in relation to the space. Gabriel Hartley overlays the movement of light onto Polaroid photographs of daily views, capturing subtle shifts in time and emotion. Ryohei Usui's glass objects evoke portraits of abandoned beings, radiating a quiet, solitary presence. Meanwhile, Kate Newby surprises viewers with objects pulled out of a pocket, as if they are tiny universes that unfold in the palm of a hand.

These small sparks of inspiration and quiet whispers from the artists' daily practices converge here, resonating with the space and with each other. How much of this will we be able to see? And how much will we truly grasp?

Exhibiting Artists: Ryoko Aoki, Maureen Gallace, Gabriel Hartley, Kate Newby, Hiroshi Sugito, Ryohei Usui

Sandglass flowing backward

Curator: Tomoya Iwata

The former Yamaguchi Mankichi Residence, known as kudan house and the venue for this exhibition, was completed in 1927. The building enters its 99th year of history this year, having survived numerous challenges, including the Great Tokyo Air Raids, the pressures of developments during Japan's rapid economic growth and the bubble economy.

Ninety-nine years—a span of time that feels immense when framed by historical events. Yet, when considered as the extension of our daily life or transitions of a familiar landscape, it might feel like a surprisingly recent past—closer than one might initially think.

This exhibition invites you to contemplate the time embodied by kudan house and our own finite time and beyond, through the works by two artists who engage in thoughts using their own bodies.

Exhibiting Artists: Shugo Kashiwagi, Ryota Kito