

**MOT Collection:
Membrane of the Time
Special feature | YOKOO Tadanori—Ever-Changing,
Like Water
100th Anniversary of Birth | Sam FRANCIS**

**Sat. 15 July – Sun. 5 November, 2023
Collection Gallery, Museum of Contemporary Art
Tokyo**

Foreword

The Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo houses approximately 5,700 artworks in its extensive collection, which spans the modern and contemporary periods with a focus on art of the postwar years. Each installment of the “MOT Collection” exhibition introduces artworks in the collection from various themes and angles in its effort to convey the diverse appeal of contemporary art.

On the 1st floor, works from the end of the 1980s onward will be presented under the title, “Membrane of the Time.” Starting with recently acquired works by MIKAMI Seiko produced in the early 1990s, we introduce a diverse selection of works that employ a wide variety of media, including painting, sculpture, installation, photography, and video. “Membrane,” mentioned in the title of this section, is one of the keywords that Mikami had repeatedly used around the time in which she produced these works. A membrane is literally a thin layer that is located between the inner and outer surfaces of something. While it protects what is contained within, it also serves to enshroud and conceal. The exhibition likens this “membrane” to various things such as the skin covering the surface of organisms, the ideas that shape individual consciousness and society, and the relationship with technology that expands the capabilities of the human body. As we reflect on the past thirty years or so in which these works were created, we hope viewers will take this opportunity to enjoy engaging with each artist’s endeavors while looking at the shifting sense of the corporeality and outlook on life that is observed there.

The 3rd floor section titled, “Special feature: YOKOO Tadanori—Ever-Changing, Like Water” introduces works spanning from the 1960s to recent, centering on those newly added to the museum’s collection. Yokoo Tadanori has worked as a graphic designer and illustrator since the 1960s, continuing to develop his oeuvre across a wide range of fields after shifting his focus to painting in the 1980s. In 2021, the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo held a large-scale exhibition focusing on Yokoo’s paintings titled, “GENKYO YOKOO TADANORI.” On this occasion, we present a combination of works that were collected in correspondence to his solo exhibition as well as a selection of his graphic works that were not showcased at the time. Yokoo’s work has undergone a myriad of transformations “like water” throughout his extensive career of over 60 years. The exhibit explores new appeals of his artistic practice through focusing on expressions related to “water” that appear in many of his rich variety of works. In addition, works by artists that inspired Yokoo will be presented.

Also featured is a series of large-scale paintings by Sam

FRANCIS, of which this year marks his centennial.

We hope visitors will take the opportunity to freely enjoy the diverse variety of works.

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 MIKAMI Seiko

In *Scale* (1993), multiple shower heads are lined up on the wall, and a weighing scale is placed in front of them. The showers are of course fake, and when confronting the work, viewers can only imagine their bodies being hit by the sheer pressure of the water that may potentially be sprayed from them. Nevertheless, it sufficiently evokes the concept of hygiene that demands excessive cleanliness, and the compulsion of having (or being in) control of one’s body.

The installation consisting of nine plastic suitcases lined up on a roller conveyor and a yellow container tied to a carry cart is constructed based on MIKAMI Seiko’s (1961-2015) 1993 solo exhibition “World Membrane: Disposal Containers.”* Each suitcase, whose sides have been replaced with transparent material, is packed with storage containers for medical or industrial use, as well as equipment such as protective gloves. Words such as “Radioactive Waste,” “Laboratory Animals: Infectious Waste,” “Biohazard” and symbols indicating precautions for handling are written on the various labels and tags affixed to the containers, creating somewhat of a grave atmosphere. The use of suitcases and a scene reminiscent of a baggage inspection area at an airport, implies the possibility that the substances stowed in the containers can travel (be transported) across borders. Today, thirty years later, in the context of having experienced a global pandemic, the work appears to convey Mikami’s foresight as it suggests the manner by which viruses manage to leak out and spread no matter how much they are sealed and protected.

Mikami Seiko, who passed away suddenly in 2015, had been active as an artist for around thirty years. Her practice can roughly be divided into two distinct phases: the 1980s, when she used junk materials (scrap metal, broken machines, electronic substrates, cables, etc.) to create objects, large-scale installations, stage sets and so forth on the theme of information society and the human body; and the 1990s onwards, during which she began producing interactive works using perception as a key interface after studying computer science in New York.

Mikami’s works that have recently been added to our museum collection were created in the early 1990s, which was a transitional period. They are valuable examples for exploring the changes and continuity of Mikami’s activities, as an artist who only has an extremely limited number of extant works.

*Held at Gallery NW House in Tokyo (1993).

2 FANG Lijun, HIRAKAWA Noritoshi, OZAWA Tsuyoshi

In China, following the Tiananmen Incident (1989), young artists who preserved the memory of the incident gave birth to a

contemporary art movement known as cynical realism, which comically portrayed feelings of anxiety, helplessness, and resignation within the context of figurative expression. The figure floating on the water with their eyes closed in the work *1993 No.11* (1993-1994), painted by FANG Lijun (1963-) who had embodied this movement, is in fact a self-portrait of the artist himself. A certain kind of uneasiness can be felt even in the midst of tranquility, if one imagines the painting's introspective grey surface as being a membrane that seals within it the feelings and cries of youths who were left repressed.

"S" which serves as the title for the series of black and white landscape photographs by HIRAWAKA Noritoshi (1960-) derives from first letter of Switzerland where the images were taken, as well as the word "suicide." In Switzerland, where suicide is regarded as a religious taboo, Hirakawa took bird's-eye view photographs of locations where suicides had actually taken place. When gazing at the scenery that the people who took their own lives would have seen during their last moments, one may feel a strange sense of lightheadedness, as if drifting between the realms of life and death.

OZAWA Tsuyoshi (1965-) uses the term *Jizoing* in the title of his series of photographs that capture small hand-made "Jizo" statues within the various landscapes encountered during his travels around the world. The "Jizo" were originally three-dimensional figures made of clay, but eventually were simplified to symbols that could be drawn with more ease. Some of the names of the places he visited are associated with major disasters and historical events. The dark blue monotone color scheme inspired by the sky before sunset seems to express the ephemerality and meaninglessness of life. The quiet appearance of the Jizo that have been casually inscribed, also conveys to us the solemnity of asserting what it means to travel the earth with one's own feet and experience various locations in person, despite the contradictions one may harbor.

3 ISHIHARA Tomoaki

ISHIHARA Tomoaki (1959-) does not adhere to a particular style or technique, but instead always creates what he wishes using methods that appear most appropriate. Many of his works reflect his interest in the body (human body), a theme which he has continued to explore while repeatedly changing his approach.

In *Engagement* (1988), the distinct fresco-like texture of the blue color surface that extends throughout was obtained by frottaging*¹ the surface of the square floor tiles in Ishihara's studio at that time with oil paint. Placed in one corner, is a spindle-shaped canvas which appears to resemble a boat or a seed. The artist describes this shape as alluding to an extremely simplified representation of the human body, with the spine as the center line. An almost life-size photographic image of a naked man (the artist himself) standing in a reclined pose is printed onto its surface which is coated with photosensitive emulsion. The organic form of the human body depicted within is emphasized by its contrast with the geometric outline of the shaped canvas. Ishihara himself envisioned shape of things to be determined as a result of the conflict between internal and external forces.

In the "I.S.M." series (around 1987-1992), in which he

worked with a variety of materials and techniques, he abstracted each part of the human body and explored the possibilities of shapes and forms through combining them. *I.S.M. Kit-A #2, I.S.M. Kit-B #1* (1991) are three-dimensional works made by assembling individual relief parts that have been cut out from a single PVC sheet "I.S.M. Owned (KIT)" (hereafter referred to as KIT). According to Ishihara's manual, it is possible to purchase the KIT itself as a multiple piece and own it without making any modifications, but should it freely be assembled and signed, it becomes the owner's own work. On the other hand, if Ishihara "certifies" and signs the assembled piece, it is considered a one-and-only work by Ishihara.*² Ishihara states, "KIT represents the relation between you and me (Ishihara)." Using KIT as a medium, Ishihara attempts to create a form of relationship surrounding the work through collaborations with each owner.

*¹ A technique in which a piece of paper, etc. is placed on an uneven surface and the pattern is transferred onto the paper by rubbing it with a drawing tool.

*² The works in the museum collection are version that were assembled by the artist himself.

4 HOMMA Takashi, KAIHATSU Yoshiaki

Ever since the nation's period of high economic growth, Japan's suburbs have developed concentrically around urban areas. This movement has been observed not only in Tokyo's metropolitan area but also in rural regions due to public infrastructure projects that were carried out during the bubble period, as well as road constructions implemented as an economic measure after its collapse. Residential and commercial neighborhoods with homogeneous and artificial appearances devoid of local character had thus emerged across various parts of Japan.

TOKYO SUBURBIA (1995-1998) is a series of photographs by HOMMA Takashi (1962-). Here, ubiquitous urban and residential areas around Tokyo, as well as the youths and children who live there, are captured in bright and translucent colors. Brand new asphalt laid out on rezoned plots of land, houses that give a similar impression while employing slightly different designs and building materials, plants that are yet to take root and appear like some estranged foreign object, and the innocent expression of young boys and girls that neither seem to resist nor abide. While such landscapes are detached from the land's history like some fictional concoction, for the generations of those who were born and live there, they are simply places within which their everyday lives unfold. Homma attempts to capture the surface of these landscape from a neutral perspective while maintaining a certain distance.

KAIHATSU Yoshiaki (1966-) creates performances and installations based on familiar events and interests with the theme of communication. Since he was a student at art university, he has regularly exhibited his works in various spaces centering on rental galleries in Tokyo's Ginza district. While there are some works that he produces meticulously on his own, he also carries out various large-scale projects that are realized as a result of the participation and cooperation of viewers, made possible by lowering their defenses through his unpretentious style and personality. One of his early video works, *Roll* (1998), presents unedited footage of the artist simply engaging in the

act of rolling forward in the middle of a road that extends from the back of the screen to the front. In the background of the footage filmed in New York during his artist residency, is the World Trade Center, which collapsed several years later due to the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

5 MURASE Kyoko, KATO Mika, IBA Yasuko

The paintings by MURASE Kyoko (1963-) often feature young girls (or human-like figures that evoke such presences). In *Carousel* (2003), the shape of the figure who appears to fling their body around as if spinning in large circles, is not necessarily depicted with a definitive outline. Rather, it manifests through the boundaries between the fluid areas rendered by means of the artist's vibrantly gestural brush strokes, breaking off here and there to coalesce with the surroundings. The figure with their eyes closed and lips lightly pursed suggests an air of introspection, as if trying to perceive the world with every fiber of their being through sharpening their senses other than sight. The girl in the painting, while stirring the sensibilities of the viewer, is perhaps entrusted with the enticing role of connecting to the indescribable feelings and ambience that Murase attempts to capture.

Canary (1999), which depicts a young girl whose expression appears somewhat mature for a child, is so elaborate that from a distance it may be mistaken for a photograph. However, upon close observation it is possible to see that everything from each individual eyelash to the small freckles have been painted meticulously by hand. In producing her work, KATO Mika (1975-) begins by collecting images of faces cut out from magazines, and creating a clay doll with a facial expression that fuses all of them together. This doll is then photographed from different angles for reference and serves as the model for her oil painting which is executed in painstaking detail. Viewers may perhaps notice the miniscule dots of color that are scattered throughout the painting like a fine spray. This particulate membrane that does not actually exist in reality, instills the lifeless doll with the texture of raw skin and flesh, as if she were a living and breathing being.

IBA Yasuko (1967-) also begins by taking photographs of her subjects, and then creates oil paintings based on those photographs. *Untitled 2009-02* (2009) which depicts a close-up of a cushion, does not harbor the coldness and hardness that tends to be observed in hyperrealist painting. The matte finish, achieved by layering and blurring the paint with a brush used for *nihonga* (Japanese-style painting), preserves the painting in an exquisite place between austerity and overelaboration. The contours of the plant patterns on the cushions blur softly, taking on a unique three-dimensional effect, and appearing to be somewhat independent and organic in themselves. The artist places significance not on what is depicted, but on the qualities that are felt with the body.

6 Thomas DEMAND, FUKUDA Miran

What is seen here is a control room where the louvers of the ceiling lights have become dislodged and are left hanging. From

the files that lie open and abandoned offhandedly to the meters and gauges with no writing on them whatsoever, everything seems to have a matte and unnaturally uniform texture, while also embodying an air of anonymity. The scene closely resembles that of a serious incident yet is somewhat vacant.

Thomas DEMAND (1964-) collects images found in newspapers, magazines, and the internet, using them as references for building elaborate full-scale paper models of scenes he wishes to create. His works, made by further photographing these models with a large-format camera, present fictional "places" that harbor a sense of reality that is at once different from the source photograph and is also by no means a product of 3D computer graphics or photomontage. In these abstracted spaces, human figures are intentionally removed as if to eliminate any unwanted interference.

FUKUDA Miran (1963-) is an artist who focuses on the act of "seeing," and through her works repeatedly encourages viewers to question what it is that they are looking at. Presented, is an oil painting with vermilion lines in a grid pattern painted in the foreground of the image as if to obstruct one's sight. At first glance, the bold lattice pattern looks like an abstract rendering, yet when reading the title, one realizes that the composition depicts a specific motif -the packaging of a condiment product that is all too familiar that we take no notice of it in our everyday lives but is that which many people can easily imagine.

Although working with different methods and media, both Demand and Fukuda seem to access images through multiple layers, discovering things that otherwise would have remained unseen, and persistently engaging in an attempt at their analysis.

7 NAWA Kohei

When peering into *PixCell-Bambi #3* (2014) by NAWA Kohei (1975-), it is possible to capture glimpses of a fawn on the surface of the acrylic box. However, when trying to confirm the presence of this fawn that is supposedly contained within the box, one's focus shifted as a result of the prism sheet attached to the surface, and thus any attempt to perceive it in one place is rendered futile. The complex shape of this small animal as well as the tactile texture of its fur, is reduced to a rectangular acrylic plane and its smooth surface.

In *PixCell-Deer #17* (2009) and *PixCell-Bambi #10* (2014), the surface of a taxidermized deer is covered with transparent spheres (cells) of various sizes. Each sphere, with an effect equivalent to a lens, changes the appearance of the color, texture and size of what lies beyond it. Taxidermy by nature are objects in which only the skin is preserved in a realistic state, as the inside is empty. The spheres that cling to the exterior of the deer as if tracing the contours of its form, create a further membrane of light, encapsulating the raw reality of the animal while abstracting its presence.

PixCell, mentioned in the title of the work, is a neologism devised by the artist, and is a combination of the words Pixel and Cell. It illustrates Nawa's thoughts on the body and the nature of its perception in times when we are forced to update our understanding of reality in the realm between digital and analog as information technology continues increasingly penetrate our lives.

To our sense of sight and touch, the world appears to be a continuous series of surfaces, with objects covered by various skin that allows us to determine conclusively whether something feels real or not. This 'skin' is the interface connecting our sensibilities with matter, and images are produced from the interaction between them.

* Nawa Kohei, *KOHEI NAWA –SYNTHESIS*, exhibition catalogue, 2011, p.168

8 CHIBA Masaya, KANEUJI Teppei

In his paintings, CHIBA Masaya (1980-) directly depicts that which he sees in front of his very eyes. However, they are temporary artificial landscapes arranged by the artist like a stage set, bringing together miscellaneous items including handcrafted objects made out of paper clay and pieces of wood, articles for daily use, tools, machines, and plants, as well as different materials such as wood, glass, plastic, metal, and fabric. *Turtle's Life #3* (2013) is one out of a series of works in which Chiba depicts his pet turtle viewing various imagery that he wishes it to see. The work was produced publicly in the museum's exhibition gallery, based on a set that the artist had made on site using objects brought from his studio. Multiple spaces are displayed on the monitors in the painting, indicating the fact that footage from multiple locations were broadcast in real time during its time of production. In addition, multiple perspectives randomly coexist in this landscape, as evident in the subtly placed photographs and sketches, objects with faces, camera lenses, and the turtle's point of view. While skillfully painting the different textures of each and every object, Chiba seems to humorously convey the complex aspects of society that cannot be grasped from a single perspective.

A familiar cityscape may appear different when covered in snowfall. The white blanket of snow generates a different landscape as the contours of various things ambiguously blend together. To create works inspired by this curious phenomena, KANEUJI Teppei (1978-) covered assemblages of miscellaneous objects (such as toys, tools, furniture, and junk) first with white powder, followed by experiments with melted plaster, and finally arriving at white resin which drips down from top to bottom as seen in *White Discharge (Built-up Objects) #4* (2009). Fluid things have the ability to transform the subject into an uncontrollable amorphous state and encourage the creation of something new. Kaneuji himself mentions that he had been able to overcome difficulties and challenges in his life and practice as an artist through responding flexibly to each situation, rather than attempting to control it.

9 MOMOSE Aya

MOMOSE Aya (1988-) who began producing videos as a means to document her performances, traveled all the way to Mongolia to create the work *To Cuddle a Goat, a Poor Grammar Exercise* (2016), inspired by a historical anecdote that she had stumbled across on the internet. The anecdote described how the British Navy sent a large number of goats to the Japanese army as a form of aid during WWI, yet the Japanese army, unable to understand that the animals were intended to provide soldiers with sexual relief, had instead used all of them for food. Momose

compares the female body including her own, with the presence of such goats that were involuntarily made an object of male sexual desire and traded like goods. In doing so, she attempted to engage in a "dialogue" with the goat as an 'other.' In the work, two pieces of footage are played alternately. One shows Momose in her room in Tokyo painstakingly copying a caricature she found online onto a sheet of paper using edible paint, while the other shows her traveling to a field in a foreign country in search of a goat. Ultimately, her one-sided enthusiasm fails, and her gestures of atonement and sympathy are completely rejected by the goat. This unscripted, absurd performance is filled with a cynical sense of humor and a pathos that seems to accept the futility of life as it is.

I.C.A.N.S.E.E.Y.O.U (2019) is a video performance that reconsiders the classic relationship between seeing and being seen. The content itself is a simple act of converting the string of letters "I.C.A.N.S.E.E.Y.O.U" into morse code and repeating it through blinking her eyes. However, unlike signals that are transmitted mechanically, the video signals that Momose communicates using her own living body add non-verbal information such as her overall appearance and facial expressions as multi-layered interferences. Momose was inspired to create this work after having seen a video on the internet in which a person who was unable to speak while being held hostage overseas, while seemingly obeying the perpetrators, communicated an SOS message in morse code through blinking.

10 HAN Ishu

HAN Ishu (1987-) has created numerous short videos taken with a fixed-point camera that capture simple actions performed by himself in various landscapes of choice. The ocean in particular, has been repeatedly used as a symbolic location for the artist. Han describes the ocean as "not a distant memory, as in a nostalgic landscape. Rather, it is a formless place that reflects our present life itself". * What the ocean implies changes according to each work, at times conveyed as a borderline realm that both separates and connects the places that lie beyond it and where one is now, while in other instances, it is tied to the society one must fight and resist or is described as a place to measure the relationship between humans and nature.

Place to Return (2010) is Han's first video performance in which he engages with the ocean. The artist is seen on a deserted beach, crawling towards the ocean. He crawls slowly towards the water's edge like a sea turtle while maintaining a low profile, but is eventually pushed back by the waves and is unable to venture further. In *A person as a territory* (2016) comprised of four consecutive photographs, the artist is shown laying down on a small uninhabited island, with the rising tide gradually covering the island's surface with seawater until finally, his body becomes a plot of land floating upon the ocean. The sheer simplicity of Han's work allows for multiple interpretations.

Han was born in Shanghai and grew up in the Aomori Prefecture in Japan's Tohoku region with his family since the age of nine. Following the Great East Japan Earthquake, unable to bear his helplessness and frustration, he traveled by bicycle from Tokyo to Aomori while engaging in volunteer work in the

disaster-struck areas along the Pacific Ocean. *return* (2011) is a work that he made upon returning from this trip. Han stands in front of the ocean naked, as his clothes are thrown back at him from its waters (it is in fact reversed documentation footage of the artist throwing the clothes he has taken off into the ocean). In this work, Han seems to express his fear of the ocean which harbors an enormous energy as exemplified by the tsunami that can instantly take the lives of many people, and at the same time accepts the smallness of human beings who are empowered by nature. While serving as a requiescat for those who lost their lives, it seems to affirm that even after an irrational calamity, those who are alive have no choice but to live on while harboring their weaknesses and contradictions.

* Han Ishu, "Scenarios Drifting Ashore," *A sea, a living room, and a skull*, exhibition catalogue, 2021, p.36

11 UMEZAWA Kazuki

UMEZAWA Kazuki (1985-), whose parents run a painting class, specialized in art in high school and studied imaging arts and sciences at university. He has also enjoyed games and anime since childhood, belonging to a generation that grew up familiarizing themselves with digital devices and directly experiencing new cultures conceived in tow with the popularization of the internet. Umezawa had originally engaged in collecting large amounts of images of popular anime and game characters that he loved on the internet, making collages out of them using digital image processing software. Eventually, he arrived at the production method of further processing, deconstructing, and reconstructing these digital collages to transform them into works. Umezawa's work, which traverses between internet space and the real world, otaku culture and art, is attracting attention as a means of expression that is symbolic of the post-internet generation.

The Great East Japan Earthquake that occurred in 2011 not only physically destroyed the sceneries of the affected areas, but also led many people to confront the fact that virtual space, which was thought to be free and infinitely expandable, was based on physical reality. *A Certain Mankind's Super Landscape* (2011) is a work that Umezawa produced after visiting the areas devastated by the earthquake while struggling with how to respond to this major incident that had occurred.* In his previous works, images multiplied and proliferated within virtual spaces detached from any sense of gravity. Here however, based on the perspective spaces of landscape photographs of the actual disaster-stricken areas, he depicts the accumulation of virtual images as evoking a massive surge of energy, all the while blending fiction and reality on the same plane.

*The work in the collection is a version partially revised by the artist between 2018 and 2019.

12 100th Anniversary of Birth | Sam FRANCIS

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Californian abstract expressionist painter Sam FRANCIS (1923-1994), we present a series of large-scale paintings (owned by

Asahi Group Japan Ltd.) that are deposited in the museum collection.

Sam Francis's career as a painter began in 1944, while being hospitalized with spinal tuberculosis due to an accident during his flight training for the US Army Air Corps. It while bedridden in hospital that Francis started painting with watercolors as a form of therapy, eventually leading him to pursue his studies in art. After moving to Paris in 1950, he came to attract attention as an up-and-coming painter in Europe, where *art informel* was flourishing at the time. Furthermore, Francis was also a painter who developed his artistic practice while maintaining a deep connection with Japan, ever since visiting for the first time in 1957 during his travels around the world. The paintings in this room, produced in 1985, are large-scale works that boldly and generously incorporate various elements observed in his past oeuvre, and were brought to Japan as a result of a solo exhibition that traveled around the country.

In the mid-1960s, Francis, while keeping studios in Europe and Japan, relocated his life and practice to his hometown of California. It was soon after this move that he began to place his canvases on the floor and paint with fast-drying acrylic paint. As observed in *Untitled (SFP85-95)*, *Untitled (SFP85-109)*, and *Untitled (SFP85-110)*, the aqueous blotches of color and the undulating streaks that harbor white void-like spaces within, along with splashes of paint, vivid cluster of hues, and fine lines that seem to dance in the air, create a unique floating sensation. The artist once stated, "I am fascinated by gravity...I like to fly, to soar, to float like a cloud, but I am tied down to place. Painting is a way in and out."* By committing ourselves to the spaces that unfold within the paintings, we may find our senses to also be newly expanded and reawakened.

*Peter Selz, *Sam Francis*, New York, 1975, p. 14

13 The Artists that Inspired YOKOO Tadanori

In conjunction with the special feature on YOKOO Tadanori (1936-), we introduce works by artists who inspired Yokoo.

In 1967, Yokoo traveled to New York for the first time and visited the "Factory," the studio of artist Andy WARHOL (1928-1987) who at the time was an unparalleled superstar of the art world. Warhol, who printed silkscreens while donning his characteristic long silvery hair and sunglasses, was a man of few words and lacking in emotions. Yokoo mentions, "He seemed so disembodied, that I felt as if I were meeting one of several copies of Andy Warhol." *A Set of 6 Self-Portraits* (1966) is a series of six self-portraits in different combinations of colors and plates, all framed in one. As the images are repeated, they seem to emphasize Warhol's presence as an idol or feigned fantasy of sorts, while foreshadowing a sense of death.

Yokoo, who was inspired by the nude figures depicted by Tom WESSELMANN (1931-2004), had scheduled a meeting with the artist upon his second visit to the United States in 1968. Wesselmann offered to exchange his own prints for the book *Tadanori Yokoo's Posthumous Works*, which Yokoo had brought with him. In particular, Wesselmann expressed a fondness for the series of pink female nudes that Yokoo had painted in 1966. The work *Bathtub Collage #2*

(1963) recreates a bathroom by incorporating towels, cosmetics, and other actual objects into the picture plane, but at the same time, it appears to be an abstract painting with a calculated balance of color surfaces.

Yokoo was introduced to Jasper JOHNS (1930-) by Japanese avant-garde composer and pianist ICHIYANAGI Toshi (1933-2022), with whom he was spending time with during his stay in New York in 1967. Yokoo recalls learning from Johns how to be absorbent as an artist, that is, how to be inspired by the works of other artists and incorporate those responses into one's own work. He also paid attention to the way in which Johns employed the same motifs repeatedly in his work, at times developing variations of them. Initially produced as a painting in 1955, *Target* (1974) is a motif that brought Johns to the forefront of attention, and has been depicted in a variety of different methods and techniques in his later works. This work was produced in collaboration with Simca Print Artists, a printmaking studio run by KAWANISHI Hiroshi. As many as 27 plates were used to make the work appear as if it were directly painted by hand.

Yokoo attributes his appreciation for the works of David HOCKNEY (1937-) to the "white light" that permeates them. He also mentions feeling a certain "sensuality" as well as "the scent of the Californian sun" in this light which in itself "does not play a psychological role." *Lithograph of Water* (1978-1980) is a series of prints depicting a swimming pool that changes its appearance in various ways according to the light reflecting upon the water's surface, realized through the technique of overprinting that enables variations of the same scene to be produced. Hockney's work reveals his interest in such techniques and in painting itself. In his lithograph of his friend Ann, Hockney demonstrates the way in which a mirror that reflects a three-dimensional object into two-dimensional, functions in the same way as a picture.

14 Special feature | YOKOO Tadanori Ever-Changing, Like Water

1. Introduction

YOKOO Tadanori (1936-) worked as a graphic designer and illustrator in the 1960s, continuing to develop his oeuvre across a wide range of fields after shifting his focus to painting in the 1980s. This special exhibition introduces his works spanning from the 1960s to recent, centering on those newly added to the museum's collection.

Yokoo's first collection of works, *Paintings, Prints and Drawings by TADANORI YOKOO* (1981), published subsequent to him expressing his decision to become a painter, featured a conversation with art critic TONO Yoshiaki (1930-2005) titled "Like Water: The Transformation of Tadanori Yokoo." Indeed, Yokoo's works, "ever-changing, like water," have undergone a multitude of changes. The exhibit explores new appeals of his artistic practice through focusing on expressions related to "water" that appear in many of his rich variety of works.

2. Scenes with Water

The majority of Yokoo's works are landscapes. In particular, many of his works depict scenes with water, from oceans to waves, horizons, waterfalls, caves, rain, and flooded interiors*. Such scenes with water may to some extent be connected to the fact that Yokoo grew up near the Kako River in Nishiwaki City, Hyogo Prefecture, and that he was born under the star sign of Cancer and the Flying Star Feng Shui star of I white water, which are both recognized as having deep connections to water.

Many of his works produced in the 1960s feature a large motif in the center of the picture plane, or are rendered in a symmetrical composition. The water depicted in them is accompanied by things that remind us of incidents and accidents, such as charging airplanes and sinking ships, or at times surround the characters as if it were a device to enhance the development of the narrative. These elements of water enter the images and collide with other fragmentary motifs, creating a sense of movement that disrupts the order and harmony of the original composition. As implied by the idiom, to "pour [throw] cold water" on something, water is also regarded as "that which stands between things and interferes with their smooth interaction (progression)." Perhaps the water in his work constantly fascinates and attracts people's attention because of the way in which it disrupts its surroundings while creating an unsettling atmosphere.

* The depiction of horizons is discussed in detail in Dehara Hitoshi, "The Introduction of a Pictorial Perspective," *Yokoo Tadanori: Beyond Graphic Work*, exhibition catalogue, Yokoo Tadanori Museum of Contemporary Art, 2014.

3. A Vessel for Landscapes

Water can take on any form depending on the vessel in which it is contained. Yokoo employs several techniques to create vessels for containing the landscape. (1) Bordering. As already noted, many of his graphic design works are framed with a border. Such brings to mind a black-edged obituary or a somewhat ominous looking tourist poster. (2) Repetition. Repetitions of motifs and compositions is the most characteristic technique observed in Yokoo's work*. Works utilizing the printmaking process can be considered as an example of this technique. (3) Emphasis on central axis and symmetrical composition. In particular, his 1970s series of work that depicts the ideal world of "Shambhala," is characterized by their balanced composition based on triangles (Δ). (4) "Yare". A technique inspired by surprint. Yokoo mentions that he found surprise and beauty in the "Yare" made by surprinting on discarded printed materials until the printing ink would settle on the paper—a sight he witnessed when working at a printing press after graduating from high school. He described the images created as "like expressions of a four-dimensional world." Many of his collages combining various images can be seen as a development of such "Yare".

**Yokoo Tadanori: HAN-HAN-PUKU-PUKU-HAN-PUKU*, exhibition catalogue, Yokoo Tadanori Museum of Contemporary Art, 2012.

4. Water / Mirrors

Water can also serve as a mirror that reflects a different

world from the one in which we are in now. Yokoo uses the power of such mirrors to open up worlds that seem familiar but have never been seen before. It is possible to identify each and every element of what is depicted in his work. Many include reproductions of or references to something. However, mysterious worlds unfold before one's eyes, as the texts featured are reversed or combined with other things. Yokoo's works are like mirrors, capturing everything within the picture plane, repeating and multiplying images as if it were a kaleidoscope. For Yokoo, "Yare" (also written in Japanese as "Yabure," meaning "rupture" or "crevice") is what informs the overlapping of miscellaneous images, yet connections could also be drawn between "Yare" and his works in which motifs are rendered transparent, with waterfalls appearing to flow through them. Like the unexpected worlds glimpsed through these chasms and crevices, Yokoo creates landscapes in which this world and otherworldly realms intermingle and coalesce.

5. Similar Shapes

The front cover of Yokoo's 1994 essay *Heaven and Earth Are Similar* (paperback edition titled, *I and Intuition and Alien*) features the ace of hearts superimposed onto an image of Mt. Fuji, which is similar in shape due to being reflected in water. This book, written with love to Mt. Fuji that he had gazed upon whilst writing, appears to play between heaven and earth. This is indicative of Yokoo's practice that attempts to connect this world and otherworldly realms through art. His attitude of not choosing one or the other, but rather both, is also expressed in the two subjects that appear in his works, such as a waterfall and cave, a man and a woman. The "Y-junction," recognized as a representative series within Yokoo's oeuvre, are of two roads branching off into different directions, while the "Hanshan and Shide" (known in Japanese as Kanzan and Jittoku) series feature two legendary monks. Such works perhaps reflect his idea that the two subjects both exist and continue to change forever while influencing one another.

"I personally feel that it is necessary to be fluid in the act of living." This way of life, "like water," as mentioned in his 1981 portfolio of works, has served as an impetus for his artistic practice that moves freely here and there.

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