

# STARS: SIX CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS FROM JAPAN TO THE WORLD

APRIL 23 [THU] - SEPTEMBER 6 [SUN], 2020 MORI ART MUSEUM [53F, ROPPONGI HILLS MORI TOWER]

The Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, is proud to present *STARS: Six Contemporary Artists from Japan to the World* from Thursday, April 23 to Sunday, September 6, 2020.

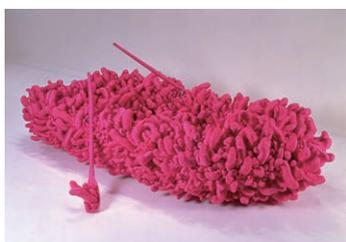
During the post-WWII rapid economic growth period, Japan continuously had national-scale events where internationalization was heavily promoted, and Japan today seems to be getting the momentum rolling again. In the contemporary art world too, there has been growing discussion of issues such as postcolonialism and multiculturalism, and the number of new venues for the presentation of art, in the form of biennials, art fairs, etc., has increased. The rise of Asian economies has been especially notable in recent years, spawning new art museums and markets in the region.

For this exhibition, we have chosen six artists whose careers propelled them beyond the confines of Japan during this period, earning them high acclaim today around the world, and across generations, and will trace the journey of these artists from their earliest to the latest works. *STARS* explores how the practice of each artist has been evaluated in the global context, and touch upon these artists' pursuit of universal issues transcending nationality and culture; traditions and aesthetics; technology and subculture, while keeping in mind aspects of social, cultural and economic background unique and particular to Japan.

The exhibition also presents archival materials related to the major Japanese contemporary art shows staged internationally from the 1950s to the present, examining the bases for evaluating art and the historical lineage of exhibitions down the decades.

## Participating Artists (in alphabetical order of artists' surnames):

Yayoi Kusama, Lee Ufan, Tatsuo Miyajima, Takashi Murakami, Yoshitomo Nara, Hiroshi Sugimoto



Yayoi Kusama *Pink Boat* 1992  
Stuffed sewn fabric, boat, pair-oar  
90 x 350 x 180 cm  
Collection: Nagoya City Art Museum



Lee Ufan *Relatum* 1969/1982  
Iron plate, glass, stone  
180 x 220 x 40 cm



Tatsuo Miyajima *Sea of Time '98* 1998  
Installation View: Art House Project "Kadoya,"  
Benesse Art Site Naoshima, Japan, 1998  
Photo: Ueno Norihiro



Takashi Murakami *Miss Ko<sup>2</sup>* 1996-2011  
Lacquer paint on plastics, fiberglass, and  
iron, corian base  
181 x 61 x 102.5 cm



Yoshitomo Nara *Voyage of the Moon (Resting Moon) / Voyage of the Moon* 2006  
Mixed media 476 x 354 x 495 cm Cooperation provided by graf  
Collection: 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa  
Photo: Nakamichi Atsushi / Nacása & Partners



Hiroshi Sugimoto  
*Polar Bear* 1976  
Gelatin silver print  
42.3 x 54.6 cm

## PRESS RELEASE

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## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Exhibition Title:** *STARS: Six Contemporary Artists from Japan to the World*

**Organizer:** Mori Art Museum

**Curated by:** Kataoka Mami (Deputy Director and Chief Curator, Mori Art Museum),  
Kondo Kenichi (Curator, Mori Art Museum), Tsubaki Reiko (Curator, Mori Art Museum),  
Tokuyama Hirokazu (Associate Curator, Mori Art Museum), Kumakura Haruko (Assistant Curator, Mori Art Museum),  
Yahagi Manabu (Assistant Curator, Mori Art Museum)

**Exhibition Period:** April 23 [Thu] – September 6 [Sun], 2020

**Venue:** Mori Art Museum [53F, Roppongi Hills Mori Tower, 6-10-1 Roppongi, Minato-ku, Tokyo]

**Hours:** 10:00-22:00 | Tue: 10:00-17:00 | \* Open until 22:00 on May 5 [Tue].

\* Admission 30 minutes before closing. | \* Open every day.

**Admission:** Adult: ¥1,800 / University/highschool student: ¥1,200 / Child (age 4 up to junior highschool student): ¥600 /  
Senior (ages 65 and over): ¥1,500 | \* All prices include tax. | \* Ticket also valid for Tokyo City View observation deck  
(excludes Sky Deck). | \* Additional entrance fee to the Sky Deck is required.

**General Inquiries:** +81-(0)3-5777-8600 (Hello Dial) [www.mori.art.museum/en](http://www.mori.art.museum/en)

## EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

### Presenting Early and Recent Works from Six Globally-Renowned Stars of Japan's Contemporary Art

Devoting a space to each of the featured artists, *STARS* presents works from when they first achieved international recognition to more recent period, or even the newly-commissioned works. It will be a magnificent, memorable exhibition of six celebrated artists of our time.

### A Perfect Introduction for the Japanese Contemporary Art Novice

*STARS* combines an emphasis on immersive large-scale installations and powerful video works, with archival displays – offering insight into the history of Japanese contemporary art and the careers of individual artists, stimulating the viewer's senses and thirst for knowledge. The exhibition offers a close-up experience of the kind unique to contemporary art, made possible by the immediacy of the museum setting.

### Archival Display 1 – Career Timelines

Chronologies of major exhibitions, plus catalogues, installation-view photographs, exhibition reviews and other materials related to the six artists will shed light on the international standing of each over the decades.

### Archival Display 2 – Fifty Overseas Exhibitions of Japanese Contemporary Art

*STARS* turns the spotlight on 50 selected exhibitions of Japanese contemporary art staged outside the country since 1950s, providing an overview of each, plus priceless original archival material such as installation photographs, and exhibition reviews written then. It attempts to show how exhibition organizers and curators endeavored to express the concept of “Japan” and how these exhibitions were received (including some trenchant critiques suggesting it was not all plain sailing), in the process unraveling the history of Japanese contemporary art's acceptance in the wider world.

The latest exhibition press images are available on the following website of ours for downloads:  
<https://press.mori.art.museum/en/press-img>

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## ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHY

### Yayoi Kusama

Born 1929 in Matsumoto, Nagano Prefecture. In 1957, Yayoi Kusama moved to the United States, where she began to exhibit and attract attention for her net paintings, which depicted mesh patterns across the entirety of their pictorial surfaces, and soft sculptures whose surfaces were covered with protuberances made of fabric. The sense of repetition seen in these works was influenced by the hallucinations and obsessions that have persisted since her youth, expressing a distinct quality that underlies all of Kusama's work. During the late 1960s, she became the subject of some notoriety for her happenings that also included fashion shows and anti-war protests, going on to become an important fixture on the New York art scene. Even after returning to Japan in 1973, Kusama continued to be active. Since the 1990s, she has exhibited a large number of public artworks and large-scale installations, winning enormous popular acclaim for her pop colors and works featuring familiar motifs like pumpkins and flowers. In 1993, she represented Japan by exhibiting at the Japan Pavilion at the 45th Venice Biennale. Starting with *Love Forever: Yayoi Kusama 1958-1968*, a solo exhibition co-organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 1998, Kusama has been holding large-scale exhibitions all over the world. In 2011-2012, she held retrospective exhibitions that traveled to four cities in Europe and the United States, including the Tate Modern, London and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. In 2016, Kusama was selected as one of *TIME*'s "100 Most Influential People."



### Lee Ufan

Born 1936 in South Gyeongsang, South Korea, Lee Ufan has been a resident of Japan since 1956. During Japan's period of high economic growth, as criticism of modernity was mounting around the world, a sculptural movement that rejected the idea of production and presented objects and materials as they were was born - a movement that later came to be known as "Mono-ha." In terms of this movement, Lee created artworks that were attuned to the mutual, reciprocal relationships between things. He also won an art criticism prize from Bijutsu Shuppan-Sha in 1969 for an essay called "From Object to Being." Through his activities as a critic, Lee made a major contribution to how Mono-ha was theorized. Ever since the *Contemporary Korean Painting* exhibition held at the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo in 1968, Lee has also played a key role for exchanges between the Japanese and Korean contemporary art worlds. After participating in the Biennale de Paris in 1971, he started to exhibit his work in Europe, mainly Germany and France, and continues to do so to this day. Lee held a large-scale retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum, New York in 2011, a major solo exhibition at the 7th Palace of Versailles in 2014, and a solo exhibition at the Centre Pompidou-Metz, France, in 2019. The Lee Ufan Museum opened on the island of Naoshima in Japan in 2010, while the Space Lee Ufan opened at the Busan Museum of Art in 2015. As Mono-ha has come to be reappraised at a global level, along with an increasing interest in postwar Japanese art and comparative research into non-Western modernisms, there is also a rising tide of interest in the diverse practices that have spanned Lee's 50-year career.



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## Tatsuo Miyajima

Born 1957 in Tokyo. Based on the concepts “it keeps changing,” “it connects with everything,” and “it continues forever,” Tatsuo Miyajima’s practice focuses mainly on installations and sculptures that use digital counters displaying changing numbers. In 1988, he exhibited a work called *Sea of Time* in the *Aperto 88* of the 43rd Venice Biennale, which was devoted to showcasing younger artists, attracting much international attention. He has held solo exhibitions at cities all around the world, including the Hayward Gallery, London, in 1997. Miyajima was chosen to represent Japan at the Japan Pavilion for the 48th Venice Biennale in 1999. Even as he tackles the universal notion of time in his work, Miyajima also integrates elements of Buddhist philosophy and technology, winning international acclaim. In recent years he has also held solo exhibitions at the UCCA in Beijing and the Shanghai Minsheng Art Museum. In addition, Miyajima has also been devoting his efforts to social participatory projects. In 1996, he launched the “Revive Time: Kaki Tree Project,” where saplings taken from persimmon trees in Nagasaki that had survived the atomic bombing are planted all over the world. Since 2017, he has also been working continuously on a project called *Sea of Time: Tohoku*, a tribute to the souls of those who perished in the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011, as well as the continued memory of this disaster.



Photo courtesy: Lisson Gallery

## Takashi Murakami

Born 1962 in Tokyo. Takashi Murakami’s “Superflat” theory reimagines the sources of Japanese traditional painting and contemporary art through the visual logic and underpinnings of anime and manga. Murakami has created many characters that are reflections of *otaku* culture, such as *Miss Ko<sup>2</sup>* and *Mr. DOB*, producing sculptures with a high kitsch factor and hyper-two-dimensional paintings that represent the polar opposite of Western perspective. His cultural theories, which are based on Japanese subculture, do not only dismantle hierarchies between high and low, but they offer a critical depiction of the postwar Japanese psychology, establishing a uniquely Japanese discourse in the context of globalizing art scene. His collaborations with Louis Vuitton and activities that have focused on street culture and contemporary ceramics continue to win him new audiences around the world that transcend the domain of contemporary art. The final installment of his “Superflat Trilogy,” the exhibition *Little Boy* at Japan Society (New York) curated by Murakami himself in 2005, won the Best Thematic Show by AICA-USA (International Association of Art Critics United States). From 2007 to 2009, his first retrospective exhibition, ©MURAKAMI, traveled to four cities in Europe and the United States, including the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Since 2010, Murakami has held solo exhibitions at cities around the world, including the Palace of Versailles, the Al Riwaq Exhibition Hall, Doha, the Mori Art Museum, the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, and Tai Kwun Contemporary, Hong Kong.



Photo Courtesy:  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

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## Yoshitomo Nara

Born 1959 in Hirosaki, Aomori Prefecture, and currently lives in Tochigi Prefecture. Yoshitomo Nara works across different media, including drawings, paintings, and sculptures. His works, which frequently feature children as well as animal and plant motifs, bring apparently contradictory personalities - the familiar and the sacred, innocence and cruelty - into coexistence with each other, provoking the imagination of the viewer. While some interpretations of Nara's works see them as embodiments of Japan's *kawaii* culture, these unstable, powerless protagonists are proxies for those who exist on the margins and boundaries of society, as well as free, unfettered spirits who wish to escape the structures of power and authority. He is also known for his deep knowledge and love of music, and a style that transcends categories by creating connections between pop culture and contemporary art. Nara began his career as an artist in the late 1980s, before moving to Germany where he was based between 1988 and 2000. In 2000, the year he returned to Japan, he held solo exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago and the Santa Monica Museum of Art (now the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles), cementing his reputation in Europe and the United States. In 2001, Nara's first major solo exhibition in Japan traveled to five cities including the Yokohama Museum of Art. The 2000s saw an increasing wave of attention to his work not just in Korea, China, and Taiwan, but also Southeast Asia, culminating in a solo exhibition at the Asia Society Hong Kong Center in 2015. Acclaim for Nara's work has been mounting in recent years: planned for 2020 are a large-scale solo exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, as well as a solo exhibition at the Dallas Museum of Contemporary Art.



## Hiroshi Sugimoto

Born 1948 in Tokyo. After moving to the United States to study photography in Los Angeles in 1970, Hiroshi Sugimoto settled in New York in 1974. He creates photographic works that have consistently been based on a clear concept since his early career, such as his "Diorama" series that shuttles between reality and fiction, "Portraits," "Theater" series that deploys long exposures for the duration of an entire film, and his "Seascapes," which depict horizons around the world. In 1977, his *Polar Bear* (1976) from the "Diorama" series was acquired by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Sugimoto's first piece to enter a public collection. Subsequently, his solo exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York that began in 1995 traveled to various cities in the United States as well as to the Hara Museum ARC in Gunma, Japan, garnering considerable attention. In 2005, his solo exhibition at the Mori Art Museum, *End of Time*, traveled to three cities in the United States. Imbued with a considered aesthetic, Sugimoto's photographs went on to establish a firm position among museums as well as in the art market. Subsequently, his epic, grandiose worldview and sense of history have not limited themselves to either the medium of photography or the field of contemporary art. In recent years, his practice has straddled a wide range of artistic domains, including architecture, traditional Japanese art, and classical performing arts. Among these undertakings is the Odawara Art Foundation Enoura Observatory, Kanagawa, which opened in 2017; twenty years in the making, this massive project, which represents a condensation of Sugimoto's worldview, has won global acclaim.



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