

# (OPENING) STARS: SIX CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS FROM JAPAN TO THE WORLD

JULY 31 [FRI], 2020 - JANUARY 3 [SUN], 2021 MORI ART MUSEUM [53F, ROPPONGI HILLS MORI TOWER]

**STARS ARE NOT MADE OVERNIGHT! - YAYOI KUSAMA, LEE UFAN, TATSUO MIYAJIMA, TAKASHI MURAKAMI, YOSHITOMO NARA, HIROSHI SUGIMOTO**

The Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, is proud to present *STARS: Six Contemporary Artists from Japan to the World* from Friday, July 31, 2020, to Sunday, January 3, 2021.

The decades of postwar economic growth were punctuated in Japan by a series of national events including the Olympics and World Expo, as the country began to turn its gaze outward once more. In the contemporary art world, the period was characterized by debates on decolonization and multiculturalism, and the proliferation of new contemporary art settings, such as biennials and art fairs.

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.

Fast-forward to 2020, we now have the world thrown into turmoil by the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the vulnerability of our social and economic structures. At this moment in history, as well as raising some fundamental questions about the essential role of art, how we define artistic success, and where we might find the "world" we seek, the output of these six top artists will doubtless offer some powerful messages suffused with inspiration for the post-corona age.



Yayoi Kusama  
Installation view: *STARS: Six Contemporary Artists from Japan to the World*, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, 2020  
Photo: Takayama Kozo

## PRESS RELEASE

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## GENERAL INFORMATION

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

**Organizer:** Mori Art Museum

**Corporate Sponsors:** MORGAN STANLEY, KAJIMA CORPORATION, OBAYASHI CORPORATION, MGM Resorts Japan, Rakuten, Inc., SENSAI, Sony Corporation, TAKENAKA CORPORATION, KINDEN CORPORATION

**Support:** JAPAN AIRLINES

**Production Support:** Delta Electronics, Inc.,  
Toshiba Lighting & Technology Corporation

**Curated by:** Kataoka Mami (Director, Mori Art Museum),  
Kondo Kenichi (Senior 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:** July 31 [Fri], 2020 - January 3 [Sun], 2021

**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 Tuesdays, September 22 and November 3.

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

\* See the Mori Art Museum website for our countermeasures against COVID-19.

<https://www.mori.art.museum/en/news/2020/06/4102/index.html>

**Admission:** Adults: ¥2,000 / Students (University/Highschool): ¥1,300 / Children (Ages 4 through Junior High School Students): ¥700 / Seniors (Ages 65 and over): ¥1,700

\* Admission requires an advance booking for a designated date/time slot through the booking website.

<https://www.e-tix.jp/mamtcv/en/>

\* All prices include tax.

\* Ticket also valid for Mori Art Museum small programs to run concurrently: *MAM Collection 012: Samson Young*; *MAM Screen 013: Mounira Al Solh*; and *MAM Project 028: Si On*.

\* Admissions to Tokyo City View observation deck, Sky Deck, and Mori Arts Center Gallery are all separate.

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



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## 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.

### An Essential "Audio Guide" Featuring the Six Artists in Their Own Words

Compiled for the exhibition and consisting mainly of interviews with the artists, this thought-provoking premium audio guide offers a comprehensive commentary by each of the six artists on their own career and works. The guide takes the form of a web application for use as a companion to viewing.



Lee Ufan  
Installation view: *STARS: Six Contemporary Artists from Japan to the World*, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, 2020  
Photo: Takayama Koza

## PRESS RELEASE

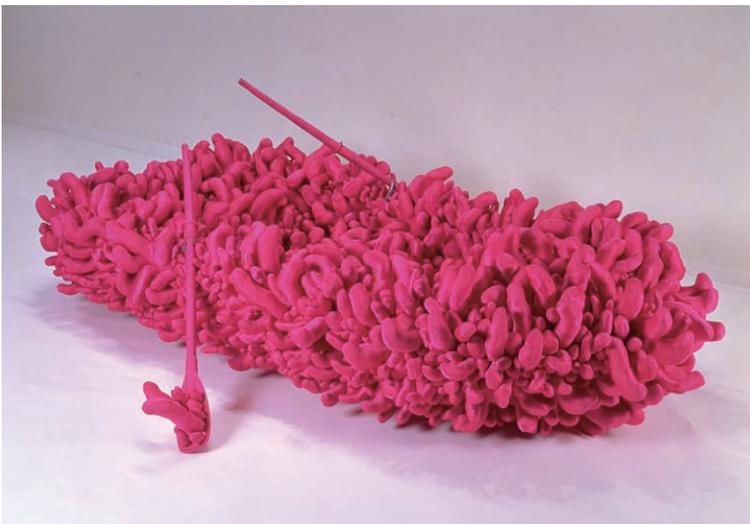
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## WORKS IN THE STARS EXHIBITION + ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHY

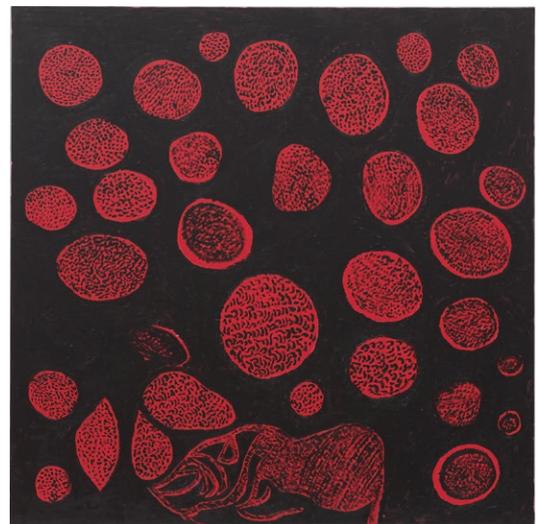
### Yayoi Kusama

Works by Yayoi Kusama range from early pieces produced circa 1960 during her time in New York, to *Revelation from Heaven (B)* (1993) and *Pink Boat* (1992) exhibited by Kusama in her capacity as Japanese representative at the 45th Venice Biennale in 1993; the installation *Infinity Mirrored Room – Lights of Shinano* (2001); and her latest painting series, “My Eternal Soul” (2009-).

Born 1929 in Matsumoto, Nagano Prefecture. In 1957, Kusama moved to the United States, where she began to exhibit and attract attention for her net paintings, which depicted mesh patterns across the entire 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 art. 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.”



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



Yayoi Kusama *SPLENDOR OF NUMEROUS LOVES* 2019  
Acrylic on canvas 100.3 x 100.3 cm  
Collection: T Party Ltd.



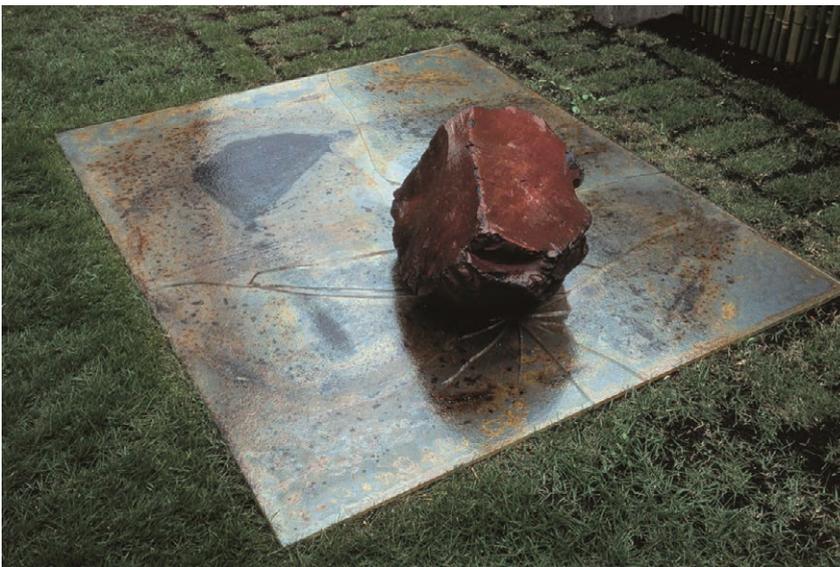
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## Lee Ufan

Featured at this exhibition is one of Lee Ufan's earliest works, *Relatum* (1969/2020), that epitomizes the artist's Mono-ha outlook, plus a three-dimensional work *Relatum - Dissonance* (2004/2020), and two new large-scaled *Dialogue* (2019, 2020) paintings. Lee's philosophy of making and not making, as well as depicting and not depicting, invariably part of his works, is evident throughout these offerings spanning several decades.

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.



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



Lee Ufan *Dialogue* 2020  
Acrylic on canvas  
291 x 218 cm



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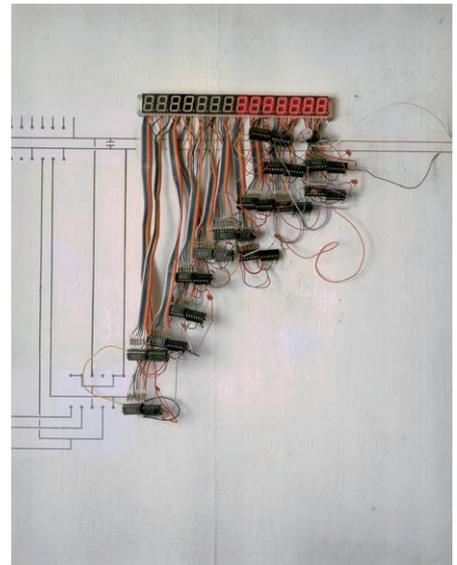
## Tatsuo Miyajima

Tatsuo Miyajima's installation here, *Sea of Time – TOHOKU Project (2020, Tokyo) (2020)* serves as a prayer for the souls of victims of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, and a wish for continued remembrance of the disaster, and developed out of the work *Sea of Time* shown by the artist at the 43rd Venice Biennale *Aperto 88* exhibition in 1988. Consisting of 719 LEDs, this is the largest installation in the series.

Born 1957 in Tokyo. Based on the concepts "it keeps changing," "it connects with everything," and "it continues forever," 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 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.



Tatsuo Miyajima *Sea of Time – TOHOKU Project (2020, Tokyo) 2020*  
Waterproof LED, electric wire, IC, water  
Installation view: *STARS: Six Contemporary Artists from Japan to the World*, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, 2020  
Photo: Takayama Kozo



Tatsuo Miyajima *Clock for 300 Thousand Years 1987*  
Light-emitting diode, IC, electric wire, and others  
32 x 21 x 4.5 cm  
Photo: Hirose Tadashi



Photo Courtesy: Lissom Gallery

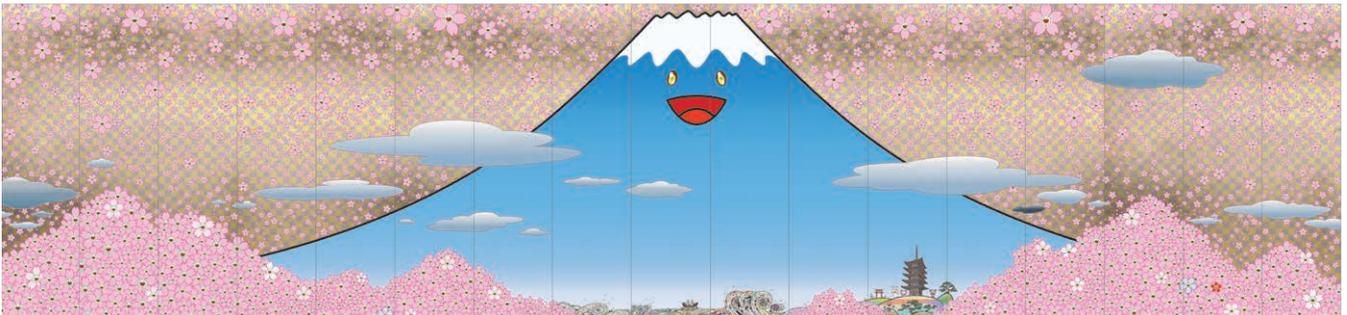
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## Takashi Murakami

Works by Takashi Murakami in this exhibition range from the life-size sculptures *Miss Ko<sup>2</sup> (Project Ko<sup>2</sup>)* (1997) and *Hiropon* (1997), and *My Lonesome Cowboy* (1998), which reflect on the peculiarities of the otaku culture, to the giant demon sculpture and a new video piece both created as a response to the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. The exhibition also presents two massive paintings approximately 20 meters in length produced for this show, and more.

Born 1962 in Tokyo. Murakami's "Superflat" theory reimagines the sources of traditional Japanese painting and contemporary art through the visual logic 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 around the world, including the Palace of Versailles, the Al-Riwag Exhibition Hall, Doha, the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, and Tai Kwun Contemporary, Hong Kong.



Takashi Murakami  
*Cherry Blossoms Fujiyama JAPAN*  
2020  
Acrylic on canvas  
500 x 2,125 cm



Takashi Murakami  
*Miss Ko<sup>2</sup> (Project Ko<sup>2</sup>)*  
1997  
Oil paint, acrylic, fiberglass, iron  
181 x 61 x 102.5 cm



Photo Courtesy:  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

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## Yoshitomo Nara

Featuring around twenty drawings ranging from Yoshitomo Nara's early career in the 1980s up to recent years, including fifteen on public display for the very first time, plus the installation *Voyage of the Moon (Resting Moon) / Voyage of the Moon (2006)*, a typical piece from Nara's mid-career period, which saw his practice broaden via collaborations and other means; a number of large portraits including one of his latest works, *Miss Moonlight (2020)*, and items from the artist's diverse personal collection.

Born 1959 in Hirosaki, Aomori Prefecture, and currently lives in Tochigi Prefecture. 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 Contemporary in 2021.



Yoshitomo Nara  
*Miss Moonlight*  
2020  
Acrylic on canvas  
220 x 195 cm  
Photo: Kioku Keizo

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



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## Hiroshi Sugimoto

Hiroshi Sugimoto's oeuvre is represented here by *Polar Bear* (1976, purchased by New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1977), the first in his early and distinctive "Diorama" series; "Revolution" series (1982-) that grew out of the artist's "Seascapes" series and makes its Japanese debut at STARS; and his first film work, *The Garden of Time* (2020), capturing the seasons in sumptuous detail at his "Enoura Observatory," which opened in 2017 and could be seen as the culmination of his creative career.

Born 1948 in Tokyo. After moving to the United States to study photography in Los Angeles in 1970, 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.



Hiroshi Sugimoto  
*Revolution 008, Caribbean Sea, Yucatan*  
1990  
Gelatin silver print  
238.8 x 119.4 cm



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



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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## EXHIBITION-RELATED LEARNING PROGRAMS

A series of talks by STARS participating artists along with various online programs (as part of “LEARNING ONLINE” under “MAM Digital”) are currently in planning. Check the Mori Art Museum website for the latest information and updates.  
www.mori.art.museum/en

**Inquiries:** Learning, Mori Art Museum

Tel: +81-(0)3-6406-6101 (11:00-17:00, Weekdays only) Fax: +81-(0)3-6406-9351 E-mail: mam-learning@mori.co.jp

## RELATED INFORMATION

### EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

#### Essays by:

Kataoka Mami (Director, Mori Art Museum)

Kondo Kenichi (Senior Curator, Mori Art Museum)

Tsubaki Reiko (Curator, Mori Art Museum)

Tokuyama Hirokazu (Associate Curator, Mori Art Museum)

Yahagi Manabu (Assistant Curator, Mori Art Museum)

Nanjo Fumio (Senior Advisor, Mori Art Museum)

Alexandra Munroe (Senior Curator, Asian Art and Senior Advisor, Global Arts, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; and Interim Director, Curatorial Affairs, Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Project)

**Size:** A4 variation (28.2 x 21 cm)

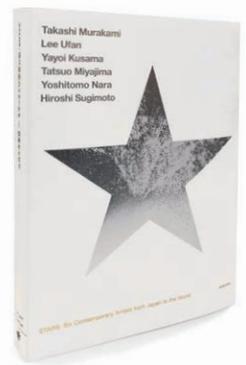
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**Inquiries:** Mori Art Museum Shop

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### AUDIO GUIDE

A web-application STARS audio guide is available for the Museum visitors. This audio guide includes a series of artist interviews and introduces the exhibited works in the exhibition.

\* Accessible only at the venue (Museum).

\* As the guide is via web application, visitors are requested to bring and use their own devices (e.g. smartphones, tablets) and earphones.

\* Neither devices nor earphones are available for rent.

**Available in:** English / Japanese

**Length:** Approx. 30 min.

**Number of Tracks:** 14

**Rental Fee:** ¥500 (incl. tax)

\* Yayoi Kusama's audio recording is courtesy of The Asahi Shimbun Company.



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