

GO FOR KOGEI 2025 Symposium

Crafting a New Tradition Through Subversion: Contemporary artists breaking barriers in Japan and beyond

This one-day symposium at the V&A will celebrate the vibrant creativity of contemporary artists breaking gender barriers and crossing boundaries in crafts. In Japan, 'craft' is of foremost importance to the nation, unlike the often marginalised state of 'crafts' that is debated in contemporary Euramerica. Since 1955, Japan's institutions and its national 'tradition' have been centred on the internationally celebrated system of Living National Treasures. This government funded system has succeeded in promoting Japanese crafts globally while shaping collections of 'Japanese crafts' within Japan's institutions and beyond - yet from its inception it has remained male-dominated. While acknowledging the significance of those practitioners, this symposium takes a different focus, particularly foregrounding women artists and makers who are working outside such institutions, and thus responds to changes arising through contemporary debate and activism to present a more expansive consideration of 'crafts'.

Firstly, this symposium focusing on women artists who work independently of institutions, in both global and local contexts. They are bringing refreshingly new ideas and forms of expression to their creative work, and challenge the traditional boundaries of crafts through their subjective approaches to body, decoration, and materiality that closely engage with their way of everyday life. Secondly, it will focus on artists who take inspiration from subcultures including anime and manga as their living culture in urban consumer society, as well as global 'fine art' practices. They are challenging the boundaries that were adopted by Japan during the late 19th century under the pressure of Euroamerican imperial power, and the subsequent legacy of the western hierarchy and institutionalisation of 'fine art' and 'crafts'.

The symposium will feature presentations from artists, curators and academics, to foster an intersectional debate on the location of crafts from the perspectives of gender, boundary, regional culture value and contemporary visual culture. Therefore, this symposium has a dual aim: to discuss postcolonial Japan's 'crafts' situation, positioned in terms of local history, and to address the contemporary Euroamerican debate on the postmodern location of 'crafts'. These issues are often separated by area studies and contemporary visual culture debate, but they are in fact entangled. Through decolonial approaches we aim to disentangle the various threads to reveal that they are in fact two sides of the same coin. Keynote speaker Glenn Adamson and moderator Tanya Harrod will lead the academic debate, while other guest speakers will represent global practitioners and promoters of crafts. As such, the symposium will speak to audiences who are interested in the contemporary question and location of 'crafts' as well as Japan's regionally specific issues of 'crafts'.

This symposium is organised by the V&A and NPO Syuto Kanazawa, supported by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan | Japan Arts Council

Programme

Date: 24 July 2025, 10:00-17:30

Venue: Hochhauser Auditorium, V&A South Kensington

Admission: £5

Welcome 10:00-10:10

Joanna Norman (Director, V&A Research Institute, National Art Library and Archives, V&A)

Keynote Lecture 10:10-11:00 *10:50-11:00 Q&A

Glenn Adamson (Curator at Large, Vitra Design Museum)

‘Into the Unknown: The Future of Mingei’

Part 1 11:00-12:00 *11:50-12:00 Q&A

Yuko Kikuchi (Head of Academic Programmes, V&A NALA, V&A)

‘Quiet, artful subversion: women artists driving KUTANism’

Masami Yamada (Curator, Asian Department, V&A)

‘Beyond Tradition: Collecting Contemporary Japanese Crafts at the V&A’

Lunch Break 12:00-13:00

Part 2 13:00-15:00 Gender & tradition in Japan: alternative spaces, alternative thought, new subjectivities *14:50-15:00 Q&A

Mini presentations (10 min.) by each artist and round table

Rui Sasaki (Artist, glass)

Suzanne Ross (Artist, lacquer)

Yoca Muta (Artist, ceramic)

Hitomi Hosono (Artist, ceramic)

Moderator: Tanya Harrod (Craft historian and writer, co-editor of *Journal of Modern Craft*)

Tea Break 15:00-15:15

Part 3 15:15-15:45

Alberto Cavalli (Executive Director, Michelangelo Foundation) [Homo Faber Project]

‘Bi No Michi: Japanese crafts and the way to beauty’

Part 4 15:45-17:20 Towards Democratization of Crafts as urban contemporary expressions of subcultures *17:10-17:20 Q&A Session

Mini presentations (10 min.) by each artist and round table

En Iwamura (Artist, ceramic)

Kazuhito Kawai (Artist, ceramic)

Shige Fujishiro (Artist, glass)

Moderator: Yūji Akimoto (Artistic Director, Go for Kogei)

*Session held in Japanese

Closing remarks 17:20-17:30

Yuko Kikuchi (Head of Academic Programmes, V&A NALA, V&A)

Speaker's Profile

Keynote Lecture



Photo: John Michael Kohler
Arts Center

Glenn Adamson, Curator at Large, Vitra Design Museum

Glenn Adamson is a curator, writer and historian based in New York and London. He has previously been Director of the Museum of Arts and Design and Head of Research at the V&A. Dr. Adamson's publications include *Thinking Through Craft* (2007); *The Craft Reader* (2010); *Postmodernism: Style and Subversion* (2011, with Jane Pavitt); *The Invention of Craft* (2013); *Art in the Making* (2016, with Julia Bryan-Wilson); *Fewer Better Things: The Hidden Wisdom of Objects* (2018); and *Craft: An American History* (2021). His most recent book, *A Century of Tomorrows*, was published by Bloomsbury in December 2024. Dr. Adamson is Artistic Director for Design Doha, a biennial in Qatar; curator at large for the Vitra Design Museum; and editor of *Material Intelligence*, a quarterly online journal published by the Chipstone Foundation. His current curatorial projects include Toshiko Takaezu: *Worlds Within* for the Isamu Noguchi Museum and *Nike: Form Follows Motion* for the Vitra Design Museum.

Part 1



Yuko Kikuchi, Head of Academic Programmes, VARI NALA, V&A

Yuko Kikuchi (PhD) is Head of Academic Programmes at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and also teaching the V&A/RCA History of Design MA course. In her positions as Professor of Craft History and Studies at Kanazawa College of Art Japan, and Reader and founding member of TrAIN research centre at the University of the Arts, she has developed an interest in decolonial transnational strategies in relation to 'crafts'. Her monograph, *Japanese Modernisation and Mingei Theory: Cultural Nationalism and Oriental Orientalism* (2004) has recently been refreshed through a Korean translation (2022). Throughout her academic career she has focused on the postcolonial conditions and sustainability of crafts in East Asia, marked by works such as *Refracted Modernity: Visual Culture and Identity in Colonial Taiwan* (2007), and 'The Craft Debate at the Crossroads of Global Visual Culture: re-centring craft in postmodern and postcolonial histories', *World Art*, 5-1 (2015). In Japan, she's been writing and lecturing about the issues of gender and sustainability in Japanese 'crafts', as well as writing about the current British 'black art' movements including Theaster Gates' 'Afro Mingei'. (<https://www.tokyoartbeat.com/articles/-/black-art-02-202305>).



Masami Yamada, Curator, Asian Department, V&A

Masami Yamada is Curator of Japanese Art in the Asia Department at the Victoria and Albert Museum, where she oversees the museum's renowned collections of lacquerware, netsuke, ukiyo-e woodblock prints, and contemporary crafts. She contributed extensively to the exhibition "Kimono: Kyoto to Catwalk" (2020) at the V&A. She is the co-author of the book *Fashion and the Floating World: Japanese Ukiyo-e Prints* (2024) with Anna Jackson, further exploring Edo period fashion culture. More recently, she co-curated "Japan: Myths to Manga" at Young V&A (2023–24), which is currently touring North America. Her current research focuses on the innovative use of centuries-old craft techniques in Japan, especially the production and use of urushi (lacquer). In 2022, she received the Art Fund's Sir Nicholas Goodison Award for Contemporary Craft to develop the museum's collection of 21st-century Japanese lacquer.

Part 2



Tanya Harrod, Craft Historian and Writer, Co-editor of Journal of Modern Craft

Tanya Harrod is the author of the prize-winning *The Crafts in Britain in the Twentieth Century* (1999). With Glenn Adamson and Edward S. Cooke she is the co-founder editor of *The Journal of Modern Craft*. Her book *The Last Sane Man: Michael Cardew, modern pots, colonialism and the counterculture* won the 2012 James Tait Black Prize for biography. Her latest books include *The Real Thing: essays on making in the modern world* (2015), *Craft* (2018) and *Humankind: Ruskin Spear, Class, Culture and Art in 20th Century Britain* (2022). She has written for *The Burlington Magazine*, *Frieze*, *The Guardian*, *Crafts*, *The Literary Review*, *The Spectator* and *The Times Literary Supplement*. She is on the Advisory Panel of *The Burlington Magazine*, was Advisor to the Craft Lives Project based at the National Sound Archive of the British Library and is a member of the Contemporary Art Society's Crafts Acquisitions Committee. She is a member of the International Association of Art Critics, and was a Senior Research Fellow at The Paul Mellon Centre in 2021. She is currently working on a double life of Margaret and Rolf Gardiner.



Photo: Hanmi Meyer / Bullseye Glass Co.

Rui Sasaki, Artist

Rui Sasaki was born in Kochi in 1984 and grew up in suburb of Tokyo, Japan. She employs glass as a material that makes it possible to document and preserve presence through her works, exploring subtle intimacy perceived in physical places. Sasaki has been invited to various artist in residence programs internationally and has shown her work at art museums worldwide. She is a winner of the 33rd Rakow Commission 2018 (Corning Museum of Glass, USA) and received the grand prize at the Toyama International Glass Exhibition 2021 (Toyama Glass Art Museum, Japan). Her work has been collected in many art museums around the world, including the Latvian National Museum of Art and the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa (Ishikawa, Japan). Sasaki has been featured in the *New York Times* and other media. She is currently based in Ishikawa, Japan.



Suzanne Ross, Artist

Suzanne Ross was captivated by urushi whilst an art student at an exhibition of Japanese Edo period art held in London. She travelled to Japan in 1984 with the aim of studying Japanese lacquer art; since then she has devoted decades to studying and making work with this unique material. She trained in Wajima, Ishikawa Prefecture with skilled craftsmen and Living National Treasures. Her work has won several awards and has been featured in exhibitions both within Japan and abroad. Her lectures and workshops aim at sharing and preserving knowledge of urushi globally and have taken place in venues including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Morikami Museum, Florida and Honolulu Museum of Art in Hawaii. She was based in the famous lacquerware town of Wajima for 34 years until the major earthquake in 2024 and now has her studio and gallery in Kanazawa.



Yoca Muta, Artist

Born in Shibuya, Tokyo. After dropping out of the painting department of Tokyo Zokei University, Muta studied from Goldsmiths, University of London with a BA in Fine Arts, beginning her making career in the UK. On returning to Japan, she further trained at the Ishikawa Prefecture Kutani-ware Technical Training Institute, and currently works from her studio in Ishikawa. Using the overglazed painting on porcelain based on Kutani style pottery, Muta creates wide range of works from tableware and artistic artefacts to three-dimensional artworks and installations, regardless of form or genre. Based on the theme of people's changing impressions of nature, she reconstructs plants, animals, gods and beasts, classical motifs on her works. In her latest series, she depicts Japanese Mystical and actual figures such as Yamaonna (Mountain Woman) and Yamauba (Mountain hag) against a background of mountains and the sea, symbols of the Japanese view of nature, as a halfway point between nature and man. Her works challenges the notions of 'crafts' and 'fine art' with a consciousness of 'Japanese aesthetics'.



Photo: Sylvain Deleu

Hitomi Hosono, Artist

Hitomi Hosono was born in Gifu, Japan, a prefecture famous for its rich history of ceramic production. Following a degree at Kanazawa College of Art in Japan, Hitomi studied in Denmark before gaining an MA in ceramics at the Royal College of Art, London. She has since settled in England and captured the imagination and acclaim of both private collectors and museums. Hosono continues to draw inspiration from her childhood memories of nature in Japan. Her grandfather worked as a specialist tiler, which along with the abundant nature in her hometown, has had a lasting impact on her work. She also enjoys walking in the green landscape of England discovering the all-encompassing beauty in nature. These discoveries feed her imagination, becoming part of her thoughts when she is creating new works. Sometimes the porcelain itself becomes the source of inspiration as the piece takes the form of her tactile memory.

Part 3



Photo : Laila Pozzo

Alberto Cavalli, Executive Director, Michelangelo Foundation

Since 2016, Alberto Cavalli is Executive Director of the Michelangelo Foundation for Creativity and Craftsmanship and Chief Curator of the non-for-profit institution's cultural event Homo Faber. He has been General Manager of Fondazione Cologni dei Mestieri d'Arte since 2007. For both foundations, Alberto works tirelessly to value, celebrate and preserve master craftsmanship and share its beauty globally, through numerous projects, from apprenticeships to exhibitions. His interest in fine craftsmanship has resulted in his co-curation of several publications and has also led him to research and stand as a visiting professor at the Creative Academy in Milan and to teach at Milan's Politecnico University. After graduating in International Political Sciences in Milan in 1998, Alberto started his career in



Yuji Akimoto, Artistic Director, Go for Kogei

Akimoto is an art critic, professor emeritus at Tokyo University of the Arts, special director of the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, and a distinguished professor at Tainan National University of the Arts. Born in 1955 in Tokyo, he holds a BA in fine art from the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. Akimoto first became involved in art projects on Naoshima in 1991. After serving as the director of the Chichu Art Museum (2004–2006) and the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa (2007–2017), he taught as a professor at the Tokyo University of the Arts while serving as the director of the University Art Museum (2015–2021). From 2017 through 2023, he acted as the director of Nerima Art Museum. He has served as the Executive Director and Curator of Go for Kogei since 2020. His past exhibitions include the first three iterations of the International Triennale of Kogei in Kanazawa (Kanazawa and Caotun, Taiwan; 2010–2017), Art Crafting Towards the Future (Kanazawa, 2012), Japanese Kogei: Future Forward (New York, 2015), Yu-ichi Inoue 1916–1985–La calligraphie libérée at Japonismes 2018 (Paris and Albi, France), and Art as It Is: Expressions from the Obscure (Tokyo, 2020).



Photo : Gentoku Katakura

En Iwamura, Artist

En Iwamura was born in Kyoto, Japan in 1988. The influence of both parents who are painter, he grew up in artistic environment. After graduate the BFA in craft at the Kanazawa collage of Art and Craft, he began to be interested in international Art world. He considers that the ceramic has the potential of being one of the international languages, which can cross the different cultures, people and countries.



Photo: cocoro

Kazuhito Kawai, Artist

Kazuhito Kawai (b. 1984, Ibaraki, Japan) graduated with a BA Fine Art at Chelsea College of Arts (UAL) in 2007. After studying contemporary art in London, he encountered his new medium which was ceramics and experienced the liberation of his creativity allowing him to find a breakthrough. Kawai then graduated at Kasama College of Ceramic Art (Ibaraki) in 2018 and is currently working in Ibaraki. His ceramic works, characterized by dynamic colors and shapes, show various expressions such as irregularity, ugliness, grotesqueness, and fragility, and express his inner self drawn out by the materials in a multilayered manner. The piled-up lumps of clay reflect the time axis of a dialogue between the clay and himself. He has been exhibiting in Japan and overseas such as Hong Kong, Brussels, Los Angeles and more.



Photo: Kai Flemming

Shige Fujishiro, Artist

Shige Fujishiro holds a doctor's degree from Hiroshima City University. During his studies, he undertook an exchange programme at the University of Applied Sciences in Hannover, Germany, which is a sister city of Hiroshima, and this experience led him to be based in Hanover. His works are made with glass beads and safety pins, and are meticulously hand-made, focusing on his own national identity and questions arising from his life. Since winning the Jutta-Cuny-Franz Award (2011) and the Corburg Prize for contemporary Glass (2014), his works has attracted attention as a contemporary art form that also combines elements of traditional handcrafts using ready-made glass beads. His works are exhibited mainly in glass museums in Germany and other European countries.