

Gravity and Grace

Part of the exhibition

Shinji Ohmaki: Interface of Being

(November 1 - December 25, 2023)

The National Art Center, Tokyo, 2023

Photo: Kioku Keizo



Magical Contemporary Art of Light and Shadow — Special Exhibition at One of Japan’s Largest Exhibition Venues

The Japan Cultural Expo 2.0 aims to build momentum for the upcoming Expo 2025 (World Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai), to support renewed interest in inbound travel to Japan, and to encourage further demand for domestic tourism. It also features a focus on “The Beauty and The Spirit of Japan,” promoting Japanese cultural arts and spreading awareness of their diverse and universal charms within Japan and around the world. This is a large-scale project with Japanese cultural facilities, arts organizations, and many others hosting and participating in a diverse range of projects and events. In this article, from among these participants, we will focus on the activities of the National Art Center, Tokyo.

Moribe Shinji

Center for the international promotion of contemporary Japanese art

The National Art Center, Tokyo (NACT) in Roppongi is known for its unique appearance, which is designed as a beautiful wavelike glass wall. As a hub for the promotion of new expres-

sive forms, NACT offers one of the largest exhibition spaces in Japan (14,000 square meters) to showcase outstanding works of contemporary art, fashion, design, architecture, manga, animation, and other art forms from Japan and overseas. It also provides a venue for presentation to art groups and other organizations active

on a national scale, such as the Japan Fine Arts Exhibition¹ and the Nika Art Exhibition². Furthermore, the NACT focuses on educational and outreach activities, such as collecting art-related information and hosting symposiums and gallery talks.



Performance by Suzuki Ryu at the exhibition space of *Liminal Air Space - Time: Vacuum Fluctuation*, an installation in the exhibition *Shinji Ohmaki: Interface of Being*

Photo: Daido Hiroyasu



Designed by Kurokawa Kisho and Nihon Sekkei, Inc., the National Art Center, Tokyo opened in 2007

Photo: The National Art Center, Tokyo



The Spinning Crocodiles, Tamura Satoru exhibition (June 15 - July 18, 2022)

Photo: Kaneda Koza

Large-scale installations gain attention

As part of the Japan Cultural Expo, since fiscal 2020 NACT has held special exhibitions in a variety of genres, including exhibitions of works by young artists. One of them is *Spinning Crocodiles*, Tamura Satoru, an exhibition which opened in June 2022 and attracted attention for its three-dimensional installations³ of a large number of spinning crocodiles.

In November 2023, NACT held the exhibition *Shinji Ohmaki: Interface of Being* as part of the Japan Cultural Expo 2.0, which took over the initiatives of the Japan Cultural Expo. His installation works – a large vessel incorporating with intense light and a wavy thin fabric – were dynamically staged in an expansive venue with a ceiling height of eight meters and a

floor space of 2,000 square meters. Consequently, the exhibition created a magical world of intersecting soft light and shadow. The exhibition was accompanied by a dialogue event between Ohmaki and poet Sekiguchi Ryoko (with simultaneous interpretation from Japanese to English) and a dance performance in the exhibition space. At the exhibition venue, visitors were able to access explanations of the works in Japanese, English, Chinese, and Korean on their smartphones via QR codes. A bilingual (Japanese/English) catalog was also produced. The exhibition attracted approximately 140,000 visitors, including more than 20,000 people from outside Japan. It was also featured in national and international art, design, and fashion magazines, particularly in the German and Italian media.

This exhibition can be viewed on

the NACT website, which also features an introduction to the *Universal/Remote* exhibition, which will be launched in March. (A bilingual Japanese/English catalog will be produced for that exhibition as well, related events will be held with simultaneous interpretation.)

Based on the results of the Japan Cultural Expo and Japan Cultural Expo 2.0, NACT will continue to explore ways to strengthen overseas information dissemination and introduce a Japanese/English audio guide system, with the overall goal of increasing the number of visitors from overseas. NACT's facilities also include a restaurant, cafes, and a museum shop, so visitors can expect to have fun if they stop by while sight-seeing in Roppongi.

The National Art Center, Tokyo website
<https://www.nact.jp/english/>

1. One of the Japan's largest public art exhibitions founded in 1907. Comprises five art faculties: Japanese and Western Style Painting, Sculpture, Craft Arts, and Sho (Calligraphy). Works by designated artists who became exempted from examinations required to display as well as awarded works are exhibited every year in fall at the National Art Center, Tokyo.
2. Public art exhibition founded in 1914. Consists of four divisions: Painting, Sculpture, Design, and Photography. Selected works are exhibited each September at the National Art Center, Tokyo. Works by Japanese entertainers, celebrities, etc., often receive a lot of attention.
3. A method of expression in contemporary art that has spread since the 1970s. Objects are installed indoors or outdoors to create a three-dimensional space. Some works incorporate video and audio, allowing viewers to experience the world of art by immersing themselves in the space of the work.