

友達と – tomodachi to: With Friends

Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 21 August – 24 October 2021

Düsseldorf is famous for having the largest Japanese community in Germany, and the third-largest in Europe after London and Paris: around 8,400 Japanese people currently live here. The city is home to the only Japantown in Germany, also known as “Nippon on the Rhine” or “Little Tokyo on the Rhine.”

Along with numerous Japanese businesses, institutions, shops, and initiatives, the Japanese influence is also evident in the city’s art scene: since the 1960s, more than 300 Japanese-born artists have completed their studies at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. Many of them stayed after their graduation and made Düsseldorf or Germany the center of their life and work.

The Japanese community and these artists have established friendships with the people of Düsseldorf. In 2021, the Japanese-German friendship will officially celebrate its 160th anniversary. As part of this anniversary year, the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf plans to celebrate this friendship and has invited five of its Japanese-born friends to participate in a group exhibition. Each of these artists, who have been associated with the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf at various times during the past five decades, was in turn asked to invite a fellow artist to participate in this anniversary show.

The result was a unique mix of different artistic media and styles, from painting and drawing to sculpture, installations, video, and performance. Together they form a diverse and stimulating sample of contemporary Japanese and European art in a friendly exchange and dialogue.

The ten artist friends, together with the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf and the curators of the exhibition, show that cultural diversity and intercultural relationships are an essential part of today’s societies. The artists enter into an exchange with each other, and the exhibition exemplifies a lively communication between cultures.

People in Düsseldorf, regardless of whether they were born here, moved here, or are visiting the city, are invited to take part in this intercultural festival, to meet old friends again, and to make new ones. Japanese–German friendship, as a symbol of cultural diversity in the city of Düsseldorf and all of Germany, is meant to help ensure that this diversity is seen by visitors as an opportunity and enrichment, with the aim of promoting a more open intercultural dialogue.

The five artists invited by the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf were born in five different decades (from the 1940s to the 1980s) in Japan and come from various artistic disciplines (sculpture, painting, drawing, installations, collage). They all studied at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, and some of them have even remained in the city to this day.

Takeoka Yūji / 竹岡 雄二 (*1946 in Kyōto) first studied from 1968 to 1972 at the Kyōto City University of Arts and then until 1979 at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf with Erwin Heerich and Klaus Rinke. His works were shown at documenta IX in 1992, have been featured in numerous exhibitions in Europe and Japan, and are part of international collections at institutions such as S.M.A.K. in Ghent, the National Museum of Art in Ōsaka, and the Deutsche Bank Collection. From 1995 to 2012 he was a professor at the University of the Arts Bremen. Takeoka lives and works in Düsseldorf.

Nara Yoshitomo / 奈良 美智 (*1959 in Hirosaki) studied at the Aichi Prefectural University of Fine Arts and Music until 1987 and then at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf under A. R. Penck and Michael Buthe until 1993. Along with Murakami Takashi, among others, he is considered an important part of Japanese Neo Pop and the Superflat movement. His works have been shown in solo and group exhibitions around the world and are part of the collections at MOCA in Los Angeles and MoMA in New York. Nara lives and works in Tōkyō.

Murase Kyōko / 村瀬 恭子 (*1963 in Gifu) studied at the Aichi Prefectural University of Fine Arts and Music before coming to the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, where she studied under Konrad Klapheck until 1996. Her works have been shown in solo and group exhibitions, mainly in Japan (at venues including the Toyota Municipal Museum of Art in Aichi, the National Museum of Art in Ōsaka, and the Nagoya City Art Museum in Aichi), as well as in the United States and Europe. Murase lives and works in Tōkyō.

Andō Yukako / 安藤 由佳子 (*1972 in Ōsaka) graduated from the Department of Sculpture at Kyōto Seika University in 1994. She then studied in Magdalena Jetelová's class at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf until 2001. Her works have been shown in solo and group exhibitions, mainly in Germany, as well as in Europe and the United States. Andō lives and works in Düsseldorf and Los Angeles.

Kinoshita Ryō / 木下 遼 (*1985 in Nagasaki) studied at the Aichi Prefectural University of Fine Arts and Music until 2011 and at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf under Tal R, Enrico David, and Tomma Abts from 2013 to 2018. Since graduating, his work has been shown in solo exhibitions in Essen, Amsterdam, and Düsseldorf. Kinoshita lives and works in Düsseldorf.

Invited artist friends:

Karin Sander (*1957 in Bensberg) invited by **Takeoka Yūji**.

Sander began her studies from 1981 to 1987 at the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Stuttgart and then until 1990 in the Independent Study Program at the Whitney Museum in New York. Her works are on view in public places and in various collections around the world. Since 2007 she has held the chair for architecture and art at the ETH Zurich. Sander lives and works in Berlin and Zurich.

Nakahara Masao (*1956 in Saitama), invited by **Nara Yoshitomo**

From 1978 to 1980, Nakahara studied art in Tokyo with a focus on oil painting, before coming to Germany in 1981. From 1982 to 1983 he studied at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Braunschweig with Peter Voigt and from 1983 to 1988 at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf with Karl Bobek and Dieter Krieg. Nakahara lives and works in Düsseldorf.

Anca Muresan (*1965 in Bucharest), invited by **Murase Kyōko**

Muresan studied at the Universitatea Nationala de Arte Bucuresti until 1990 and then at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf with Konrad Klapheck until 2000. Her work has been shown in various exhibitions in Germany and Romania and is also often on view in public spaces. Muresan lives and works in Düsseldorf and Bucharest.

Magdalena Jetelová (*1946 in Semily), invited by **Andō Yukako**

Jetelová attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague from 1965 to 1971. From 1990 to 2004 she was a professor at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, and then until 2012 professor of sculpture at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Munich. Her work has been shown in numerous group and solo exhibitions around the world. Jetelová lives and works in Munich, Düsseldorf, and Prague.

Arakawa Sōya (*1984 in Hamamatsu), invited by **Kinoshita Ryō**

Arakawa graduated from the Kanazawa College of Art in 2007 and studied in Rita McBride's class at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf from 2011 to 2015. He has had numerous solo and group performances in Germany, Europe, and Japan. Arakawa lives and works in Krefeld.

The exhibition is curated by Gregor Jansen and Alicia Holthausen.

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