

Kazuo Shiraga

Born in 1924 in Amagasaki, Japan.

Died in 2008 in Amagasaki, Japan.

Kazuo Shiraga was, together with Jiro Yoshihara, Saburo Murakami, Atsuko Tanaka, and Shozo Shimamoto, one of the founding members of the avant-garde Gutai Art Association in Japan in 1954. As the group sought to create a new art "never known until now", the young artists experimented enthusiastically not only with painting but also with various activities like open-air or staged events which were precursors to the Happenings of the late 1950s in New York and anticipated today's installation or performance elements. Gutai is uniquely influenced by its own time and place, post-war Japan. Coming out of their country's surrender in World War II, Gutai practitioners desired an art free of social criticism or political implication. Their artistic process combined action and performance with painting.

During the first Gutai exhibition in 1955 for example, Shiraga dove into a pile of mud and wrestled, kicked, and thrashed the clay mound to create an artwork sculpted by physical action. Shiraga became known as the artist who painted barefoot, hanging from a rope.

1924

Born in Amagasaki, west of Osaka, Hyogo Prefecture, as the only son in a traditional kimono merchant family.

1937

Enters Hyogo Prefectural Amagasaki Middle School and begins to read the first translations of classical Chinese literature.

1938

His father's interest in oil painting inspires Shiraga to paint with oil, and he attends a *yoga* (Western-style painting) club established by a newly arrived art teacher at his school

1941

Japanese forces bomb Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, followed by the declaration of war on Japan by the USA and the UK.

1942

Shiraga enters Kyoto Municipal Special School of Painting and majors in *nihonga* (traditional Japanese-style painting).

1944

Shiraga is drafted to the Imperial Army and trained in Osaka, but never deployed abroad.

1945

After the end of World War II, Shiraga returns to a student's life.

1946

Shiraga suffers from pneumonia and rheumatic fever and almost dies; he is subsequently confined to bed for six months. Kanayama Akira gives Shiraga two art books by Toyama Usaburo.

1948

Shiraga marries Uemura Fujiko and graduates from Kyoto Municipal School of Painting. He studies with local painter Ito Tsuguro, who encourages him to submit his works to the annual salon of Shin-Seisaku Kyokai (New Production Association).

Attends City Art Centre, Osaka, where he studies the fundamentals of oil painting and joins the New Creation Art Association

1952

Genbi, short for Gendai Bijutsu Kondankai (Contemporary Art Discussion Group), is founded. Shiraga and his peers attend its meetings and show in its annual exhibition.

Shiraga establishes Zero-kai (Zero Society) with Saburo Murakami and Kanayama Akira. Tanaka Atsuko joins later.

1953

Shiraga makes his first abstract paintings with a palette knife. Thereafter he adopts the blood-red pigment of crimson lake and begins making paintings directly with his hands and fingers.

1954

Shiraga makes his first foot paintings.

Shiraga and Murakami hold a two-person exhibition at the Hangkyu Department Store, Osaka. Shiraga's foot paintings are exhibited in Zero Society's group exhibition displayed in a store window of the Sogo Department Store, Osaka.

Gutai Art Association (Gutai Bijutsu Kyokai) is formed by Yoshihara Jiro. Gutai member Shozo Shimamoto visits Zero Society with an invitation for the leading members to join Gutai.

1955

Kanayama, Murakami, Shiraga and Tanaka join Gutai.

Yoshihara organizes *Experimental Outdoor Modern Art Exhibition to Challenge the Burning Midsummer Sun* in Ashiya Park near the Ashiya River.

1st Gutai Art Exhibition is held at the Ohara Kaikan, Tokyo. Shiraga executes *Challenging Mud* three times.

Shiraga begins to write about his art to contribute to the journal *Gutai*.

1956

Yoshihara organizes special demonstrations and the exhibition *One Day Only Outdoor Exhibition*.

Gutai organizes *Outdoor Art Exhibition* at Ashiya Park.

Shiraga creates his first extant large foot painting on paper.

Geijutsu Shincho publishes *The Gutai Art Manifesto*, commissioned by Yoshihara.

1957

Gutai Art on the Stage is presented in Osaka and Tokyo. Shiraga presents *Sanbaso-Super Modern*, dancing on stage; he also shoots arrows at a large canvas.

After receiving a copy of the journal *Gutai*, Michel Tapié travels to Japan with Georges Mathieu and Imai Toshimitsu and associates Gutai with his own Art Informel movement.

1958

International Art of a New Era: Informel and Gutai, organized by Tapié and Yoshihara opens in Osaka and tours four Japanese cities. Tapié turns the Gutai portion of the exhibition into a group show at Martha Jackson Gallery, New York. It tours to several museum venues in the USA and Canada.

Shiraga signs a contract with Tapié, consigning works to him for sale in Europe.

At the suggestion of Tapié, Shiraga starts to paint on canvas and sign his name in *kanji* (Japanese characters). He also begins to use the names of the Suikoden warriors to identify his paintings, which had previously been left merely titled as *Work*.

1965

Awarded the Amagasaki Citizen's Cultural Prize.

1966-1970

Shiraga's production of large-scale paintings decreases markedly. He all but abandons foot painting and produces a number of "fan paintings" and "squeeze paintings", in the latter of which he makes use of his feet and a wooden rod or plate.

1971

Shiraga ceases painting completely and begins training at the Tendai-sect Buddhist temple Enryakuji on Mount Hiei. He is given the monk name Sodo (Simple Path).

1972

Yoshihara Jiro dies and Gutai disbands.

Shiraga resumes painting and begins experimenting with extremely liquid alkyd paint.

1973

Shiraga uses a predominantly black-and-white palette and alkyd paint, and produces a lyrically explosive group of new paintings. His titles further diversity to include references to history and Esoteric Buddhism.

1986

Shiraga travels to Europe for the first time for a solo exhibition at Galerie Stadler, Paris, and *Japon des Avant-gardes 1910-1970* at Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

1987

Awarded the Hyogo Prefectural Cultural Prize for Excellence.

1999

Awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for Culture.

2002

Awarded the Art Prize of Osaka City Selected.

2008

Dies in Amagasaki at the age of 83.

Exhibition history – selected solo exhibitions

2019

Fergus McCaffrey, Tokyo, Japan.

2018

Kazuo Shiraga: The Water Margin Hero Series – The Courageous World of Action Painting, Amagasaki Cultural Center, Amagasaki City, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan.

2017

Axel Vervoordt Gallery, Kanaal - Wijnegem, Belgium.
Lévy Gorvy Gallery, London, UK.

2015

Lévy Gorvy Gallery, New York City, USA.

2014

Axel Vervoordt Gallery, Hong Kong.

2012

Axel Vervoordt Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium.

2011

Kazuo Shiraga, Fergus McCaffrey, New York, USA.

2010

Kazuo Shiraga: Six Decades, Fergus McCaffrey, New York, USA.

2007

Annely Juda Fine Art, London, UK.

2004

Galerie Georg Nothelfer, Berlin, Germany.

2001

Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Kobe, Japan.

Annely Juda Fine Art, London, UK.

2000

Tokyo Gallery, Tokyo, Japan.

1997

Gallery Apa, Nagoya, Japan.

1995

Amagashinkitashin Office, Osaka, Japan.

1994

Tokyo Gallery, Tokyo, Japan.

1992

Galerie Georg Nothelfer, Berlin, Germany.

Galerie Stadler, Paris, France.

1991

Gallery Shirakawa, Kyoto, Japan.

Tokyo Gallery, Tokyo, Japan.

1990

Tokyo Gallery, Tokyo, Japan.

Gallery Kasahara, Osaka, Japan.

1989

Amagasaki Cultural Centre, Hyogo, Japan.

Gallery Kuranuki, Osaka, Japan.

1988

Gallery Haku, Osaka, Japan.

Galerie Georg Nothelfer, Berlin, Germany.

1987

Centre de la Vieille Charité, Marseille, France.

Galleria Milano, Milan, Italy.

1986

Galerie Stadler, Paris, France.

1985

Gallery Re-Art, Kyoto, Japan.

The Contemporary Art Gallery, Seibu Department Store, Tokyo, Japan.

Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Kobe, Japan.

1984

Tokyo Gallery, Tokyo, Japan.

The Museum of Modern Art, Wakayama, Japan (with Sadamasa Motonaga).

1982

Gallery Haku, Osaka, Japan.

Space Adesso, Ashiya, Japan (with Jiro Yoshihara).

1981

Gendaitko Centre Mini-Pinacotheca, Miyazaki, Japan.

1980

Tokyo Gallery, Tokyo, Japan.

1979

Tor Road Gallery, Kobe, Japan.

1978

Tor Road Gallery, Kobe, Japan.

Miyako Gallery, Osaka, Japan.

1976

Asahi Gallery, Kyoto, Japan.

Shinanobashi Gallery, Osaka, Japan.

Miyako Gallery, Osaka, Japan.

1975

Kinetsu Department Store, Osaka, Japan.

1974

Tobi Gallery, Osaka, Japan.

Shinanobashi Gallery, Osaka, Japan.

1973

Shinanobashi Gallery, Osaka, Japan.

Tokyo Gallery, Tokyo, Japan.

1964

Tokyo Gallery, Tokyo, Japan.

1962

Galerie Stadler, Paris, France.

International Centre of Aesthetic Research, Galleria Notizie, Turin, Italy.

Tokyo Gallery, Tokyo Gutai Pinacotheca, Osaka, Japan.

1954

Hankyu Department Store, Osaka, Japan (with Saburo Murakami).

Exhibition history – selected group exhibitions

2018

Epic Abstraction, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, USA

Gutai: 1953 – 1959, Fergus McCaffrey, New York.

Gutai, l'espace et le temps, Musée Soulages, Rodez, France

Modern Art Revisited: From the Collection of Fukuoka Art Museum,
Hiroshima MOCA, Japan

Wonderkamer I: Axel Vervoordt, DIVA Antwerp Home of Diamonds, Antwerp,
Belgium

50 Years, 50 Artists, Annely Juda Fine Art, London, UK.

Gutai, Hauser & Wirth - New York, 69th Street, New York City, USA

Abstracting the Real, Opera Gallery, Geneva, Switzerland

2017

Intuition, Palazzo Fortuny, Venice, Italy.

Impasto: the Gestural and Sensuous in Japanese Abstract Paintings, Sakurado
Fine Arts, Tokyo, Japan.

The Creative Act: Performance, Process, Presence, Minaret Al Saadiyat, Abu
Dhabi, UAE

2016

The Emergence of the Contemporary: Avant-Garde Art in Japan, 1950-1970,
Paço Imperial, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil

2015

Shiraga/Motonaga: Between Action and the Unknown, Dallas, TX, USA.

Shiraga

Kazuo & Fujiko Shiraga, Fergus McCaffrey, New York, U.S.A.

2013

Middlegate Geel '13, CC De Werft, Geel, Belgium.

Présence/Absence, Espace Le Majorat, Villeneuve-Tolosane, France.

Clues of Asia. Asian Contemporary Art from Long Collection, The Long
Museum, Shanghai, China.

Gutai: Splendid Playground, Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA.

Parallel Views: Italian and Japanese Art from the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, The Warehouse, Dallas, Texas, USA.

2012

Tokyo 1955-1970: A New Avant-Garde, MoMA, New York, USA.

After Gutai, McCaffrey Fine Art, New York, USA.

Destroy the picture, painting the void, 1949-1962, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, USA.

Gutai: The Spirit of an Era, National Art Center, Tokyo, Japan.

Explosion! Painting as action, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden; Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, Spain.

Hauser & Wirth Gallery, New York, USA.

2010

Gutai Documents: Film and Journal, New York, USA.

2008

ACADEMIA: Qui es-tu?, Chapelle de l'Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, France.

2007

ARTEMPO, Palazzo Fortuny, Venice, Italy.

2006

ZERO International Künstler Avant-garde der 50/60er Jahre, Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf, Germany; Musée d'Art Moderne, Saint Etienne, France.

2005

Big Bang, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France.

2004/05

Resounding Spirit - Japanese Contemporary Art of the 1960s, Samek Art Gallery, Bucknell University, Lewisburg, USA.

2004

50th Anniversary of Gutai, Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Kobe, Japan.

2003

Concrete Art Association, Osaka, Japan.

The Contemplation of Space, Chelsea Art Museum, New York, USA.

2001

Kazuo Shiraga, Fred Thieler, Jan Voss, Galerie Nothelfer, Berlin, Germany.

2000

Memorial of Earthquake Disaster, Hyogo, Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Kobe, Japan.

Guten Morgen Malerei, Kunstverein Augsburg, Germany.

1999

Out of Action, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan.

The Movement of 20th Century in Art, Fukuoka City Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan.

Gutai, Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume, Paris, France.

1998

Out of Action 1949-79, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, USA and tour to Vienna, Austria and Barcelona, Spain.

Picaf -2nd International Contemporary Art Festival Pusan, Metropolitan Art Museum, Busan, South Korea.

1996

Charity Auction for Hanshin Disaster, Seibu Shinjuku Pepe Salon, Japan.

Memory of Friends: Waichi Tsutoka and Shigeru Izumi, Keihan Gallery, Moriguchi, Japan.

Art on 1953, After the War, Meguro Art, Museum, Tokyo, Japan.

The Yomamura Collection, Chiba City Museum, Chiba, Japan.

1995

Contemporary Calligraphy, Tokyo Gallery, Tokyo, Japan.

1994

Japanese Art after 1945, Yokohama Art Museum, Yokohama, Japan.

1993

Gutai II 1959-1965, Ashiya Municipal Art Museum, Ashiya, Japan.

XLV Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy.

The Gutai Group 1955/56, Penrose Institute, Tokyo, Japan.

1992

Gutai I 1954-1958, Ashiya Municipal Art Museum, Ashiya, Japan.

Reconstructed Gutai Field Exhibition, Ashiya Park, Japan.

Blue Wave, Meguro Museum of Art, Tokyo, Japan.

1991

Soga, Grand Palais, Paris, France.

Paintings on Shows Post War, Himeji, Municipal Art Museum, Himeji, Japan.

Gutai, Darmstadt Museum, Darmstadt, Germany.

Line in Contemporary Art, Saitama, Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Saitama, Japan.

Movement of Contemporary Prints, Ashiya Municipal Art Museum, Ashiya, Japan.

1990

Gutai-Unfinished Avant-garde Group, Shoto Museum, Shoto, Japan.

Stream of Contemporary Art, Toyama Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Toyama, Japan.

Giappone Al l'avanguardia -11 Gruppo Gutai Neglianni Cinquento, The National Museum of Modern Art, Rome, Italy.

1989

The Visionary Yamamura Collection, Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Kobe, Japan.

Shiga, The Masterpieces of Niigata Prefectural Art Museum, Niigata Art Collection, Wakayama Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Wakayama, Japan.

Japan and Australia Interchange Exhibition, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
Creators of Contemporary Art in Kyoto, Osaka and Kobe in Showo20, Tottori Prefectural Museum, Tottori, Japan.

1988

Art Kite Show, exhibition toured to nine Japanese museums and then internationally.

Locus of Feet 1988, Yurakucho Seibu Art Forum and tour to: Tsukashin Hall, Amagasaki, Okazaki Art Museum for World Children, Fukuyama Art Museum and Ohita Prefectural Art Hall, Japan.

Expression of Movement, Saitama Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Saitama, Japan.

Movement of Japanese Contemporary Art, Toyama Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Toyama, Japan.

1986

Japon des Avant Gardes 1910-70, Musée National d'Art Moderne Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France.

1985

Artists in Hyogo, Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Kobe, Japan.

Human Documenta '84/85, Tokyo Gallery, Tokyo, Japan.

The Society for Research for the Yamamura Collection, National Museum of Modern Art, Osaka, Japan.

Jiro Yoshihara and Gutai, Ashiya Citizen Centre, Ashiya, Japan.

Gutai and Cobra, National Museum of Modern Art, Osaka, Japan.

40 Years of Contemporary Art, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan.

Japanese Contemporary Paintings, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, India.

Reconstructions: Avant-garde Art in Japan 1945-65, Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, and Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, UK.

Group Gutai-Pintura y Action, Museo Espanol de Arte Contemporaneo, Madrid, Spain.

Japanese Contemporary Art Exhibition, Taipei City Art Museum, Taipei, Japan.

Japanese Art Today, Mandeville Gallery, University of California, San Diego, USA.

The Ohara Museum Collection, Tsukashin Hall, Osaka, Japan.

Today's Black and White, Saitama Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Saitama, Japan.

1984

Contemporary Art through the 20 Years, Gumma Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Gumma, Japan.

Sadamasa Motonaga and Kazuo Shiraga, Wakayama Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Wakayama, Japan.

Contemporary Art by Artists in Kansai 1950-1970, Yao Seibu Hall, Yao, Japan.

1982

Panorama of Japanese Contemporary Paintings, Toyama Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Toyama, Japan.

View of 30 Japanese Contemporary Paintings after the War, Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum, Hiroshima, Japan.

1981

Contemporary Art, Nara Prefectural Art Museum, Nara, Japan.

The Movements of Contemporary Art Part I, the 1950s, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan.

The Art of Today's Japan, Miyagi, Prefectural Art Museum, Miyagi, Japan.

The Time of the Change of the Contemporary Art - 1960s, The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, and The National Modern Art Museum, Kyoto, Japan.

1980

Japanese Modern Art -20 Years Post War, Kyoto City Art Museum, Kyoto, Japan.

1979

Jiro Yoshihara and Today's Aspects of the Gutai, Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Kobe, Japan.

1977

The Japanese Modern Art, Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Kobe, Japan.

1975

4 Artists in Hyogo, Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Kobe, Japan.

1970

Sekihi 70, exhibited Expo '70, Osaka, Japan.

1966

17th Selected Master Pieces, Nihonbashi Mitsukoshi, Tokyo, Japan.

1965

8th Japan International Art Exhibition, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan.

16th Gutai Exhibition, Tokyo, Japan.

1963

14th Selected Master Pieces, Nihonbashi Mitsukoshi, Tokyo, Japan.
Movement of the Contemporary Paintings, National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, Japan.

1er Salon International de Galleries Pilotes Lausannes, Musée Cantonel des Beaux Arts, Lausanne, Switzerland.

1962

Salon de Tokyo, Isetan Department Store, Tokyo, Japan.
5th Exhibition of Japanese Contemporary Art, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan.

1961

Continue et Avant-gardes au Japon, International Centre of Aesthetic Research, Turin, Italy.

Experiment of Contemporary Art, National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan.

1960

4th Exhibition of Japanese Contemporary Art, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan.

1959

XI Premio Lissone-internazionale per la Pittura, Lissone, Italy.
Metamorphoses, Galerie Stadler, Paris, France.

1958

The World of New Art, Osaka, Tokyo, Japan.

1957

First Art Show of Gutai on Stage, Osaka, Tokyo, Japan.

1955

First Gutai Exhibition, Ohara Hall, Tokyo, Japan.

Public collections

France

Centre Régional d'Art Contemporain Midi-Pyrénées, Labège (Toulouse)
Les Abattoirs, Art Moderne et Contemporain, Toulouse et Midi-Pyrénées
Musée Cantini de Marseille, Marseille
Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

Japan

Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, Nagoya
Amagasaki City Central Hall, Amagasaki
Amagasaki Cultural Centre, Amagasaki
Aomori Museum of Art, Aomori
Asago Art Village, Asago
Ashiya City Museum of Art and History, Ashiya
Bridgestone Museum of Art, Ishibashi Foundation, Tokyo
Chiba City Museum of Art, Chiba
Daihonzan Honkhoji Temple, Amagasaki
Enryakuji Kaikan, Otsu
Enryakuji Temple, Mount Hiei
Fuchu Art Museum, Fuchu
Fukuyama Museum of Art, Fukuyama
Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokio
Himeji City Museum of Art, Himeiji
Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Hiroshima
Honkōji Temple, Amagasaki
Hyogo Prefectural Public Hall, Kobe
Iwaki City Art Museum, Iwaki
Kagawa Prefectural Cultural Centre, Takamatsu
Kasai City Hall, Kasai
Kisoji Art Museum, Agematsu
Kita Modern Art Museum, Nara
Kitakyushu City Museum of Art, Kitakyushu
Komagata Jukichi Museum of Art, Nagaoka
Kosetsuin Temple, Kyoto, Kyoto
Kure Municipal Museum of Art, Kure
Meguro Museum of Art, Tokyo
Mie Prefectural Art Museum, Tsu
The Miyagi Museum of Art, Sendai

The Museum of Art Ehime, Matsuyama
Museum of Fine Arts, Gifu
The Museum of Art, Ibaraki
Museum of Art, Kochi
Museum and Archives, Kyoto Institute of Technology, Kyoto
Museum of Art, Ehime
Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo
Museum of Modern Art, Ibaraki
Museum of Modern Art, Saitama
Museum of Modern Art, Shiga
Museum of Modern Art, Toyama
Museum of Modern Art, Wakayama
Nara Prefectural Museum of Art, Nara
National Museum of Art, Osaka
National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto
National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo
Nerima Art Museum, Tokyo
Niigata Prefectural Museum of Modern Art/Niigata Bandaijima Art Museum
Office of Tendaishu, Otsu
Ohara Museum of Art, Kurashiki
Oita Art Museum, Oita
Osaka City Museum of Modern Art
Otani Memorial Art Museum, Nishinomiya
Shizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art, Shizuoka
Takamatsu City Museum of Art, Takamatsu
Tanabe City Museum of Art, Matsue
Tochigi Prefectural Museum of Fine Arts, Utsunomiya
Tokyo Municipal Museum of Art, Tokyo
Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Tokyo
Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Toyota
Yokohama Museum of Art, Yokohama
Yokosuka Museum of Art, Yokosuka

USA

Art Institute Chicago, Chicago
Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
The Warehouse, Dallas
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis