

NAKAMURA Kazumi



A Bird in its Existence 107 (Phasianus colchicus), 2006, acrylic on cotton, 260.1x190.8 cm, The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo

Date: Wed., March 19 — Mon., May 19, 2014

Closed on Tuesdays (except for April 29 and May 6, 2014) and May 7

Venue: The National Art Center, Tokyo, Special Exhibition Gallery 1E
(Tokyo, Roppongi)

Organized by the National Art Center, Tokyo Hours: 10:00 – 18:00 (10:00 – 20:00 on Fridays)

*Open until 22:00 on Sat., April 19, 2014 (Roppongi Art Night 2014) *Admission up to 30 minutes before closing



THE
NATIONAL
ART CENTER,
TOKYO

NAKAMURA Kazumi

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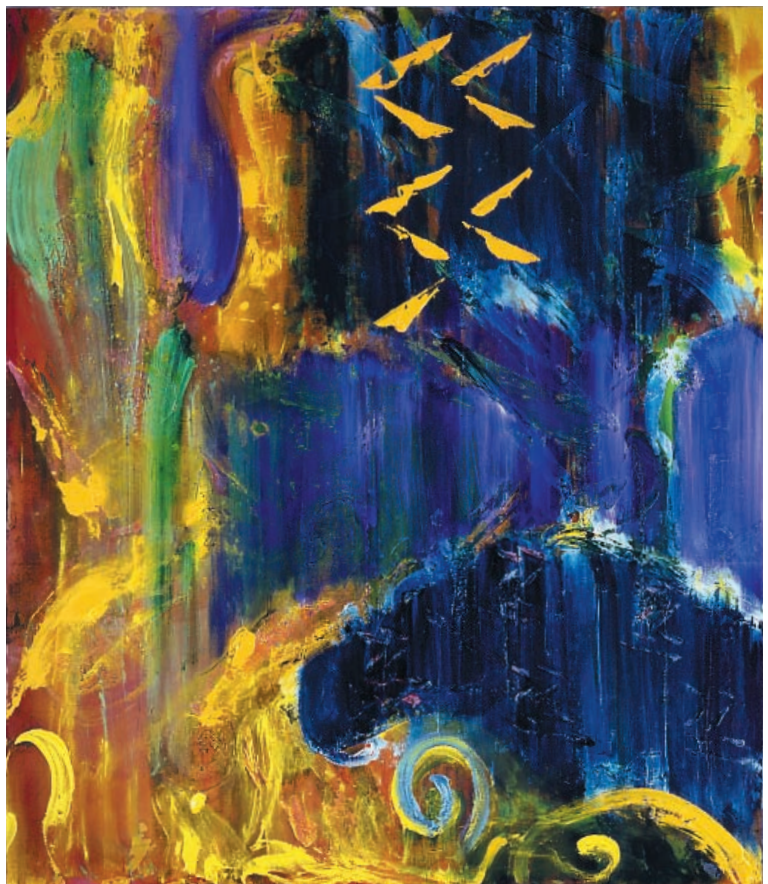
Nakamura Kazumi was born in Chiba in 1956. He received the Masters of Fine Arts degree in oil painting from Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music (current Tokyo University of the Arts). When he began exhibiting at the beginning of the 1980s, he gained attention with his expressionist style “Y” shape motif paintings. Following that, he produced in succession his *Diagonal Grid*, *C Opened*, *Ranging Difference – Broken Shelter*, *Broken Hermitage*, *Saisoro*, *Shokusocho (Phoenix)*, and other series. He has been tirelessly and dynamically exploring the meaning of pictorial space, producing more than 1200 paintings to date. Nakamura has had many group and solo exhibitions as a leading Japanese contemporary painter and his works are in the collections of major Japanese museums. He has also had solo museum shows at the Sezon Museum of Modern Art (1999) and at the Iwaki City Art Museum (2002). In overseas exhibitions, he has participated in group shows such as the *Europaria Japan '89* (1989) and *Japan Art Today* (1990-91) exhibition that toured northern Europe. In recent years, he has been exhibiting in East Asia, particularly in Korea and China. He has also published a book of theoretical essays on painting, *Toka suru hikari Nakamura Kazumi chosaku senshu (Filtered light: a Nakamura Kazumi anthology)* (Reifu Shobo, 2007).

6.
Saisoro 67 (Old Man of Oseyachi)
2001
Acrylic, water color and pebble on cotton
290×250 cm
Private collection

Nakamura Kazumi (b. 1956) started his full-fledged career as a painter in the early 1980s, and has been one of the most active among his generation of contemporary artists.

What is painting? For what purpose does it exist? Nakamura started out to answer these questions by studying the Abstract Expressionist paintings of artists such as Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, and Barnett Newman, whose works were considered to represent the culmination of modernist painting in the West, while pursuing a new type of painting and theory to supersede them. References in the spatial expression and symbolism of traditional Eastern painting such as Japanese ancient and medieval painting, Chinese Song Dynasty landscape painting, and Korean folk painting, were of particular interest to Nakamura. In the 1980s, he had already put forth his “differential painting” idea, based on his perception that the meaning of a painting exists only in reference to its differences with other paintings. He produced paintings in series, developing a number of works displaying differences on a single motif. In his *A Bird in its Existence* series that is representative of his recent work, Nakamura creates a new type of painting, difficult to categorize as either abstract or figurative, by basing a variety of painting and brushstroke techniques on a matrix that recalls the structure of pictograph characters.

Along with introducing a comprehensive overview of Nakamura Kazumi’s paintings through around 150 paintings spanning from his student works to his most recent *Hijiri (Hermit)* series, the exhibition also introduces his diagonal grid Wall Painting, conceived in 2010 and shown now for the first time. The exhibition will provide an excellent opportunity to consider an aspect of the development of Japanese contemporary painting and art.



Section I

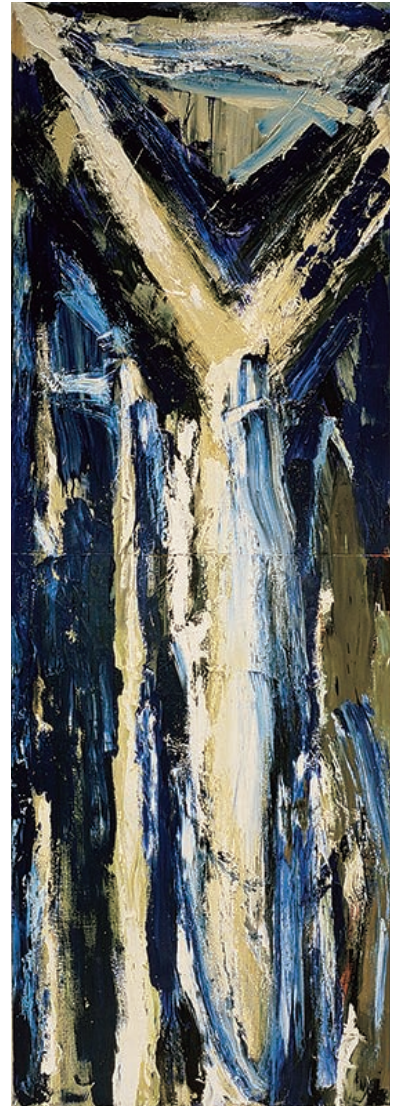
Painting as Space

Y Shape/ Diagonal Grid/ C Opened

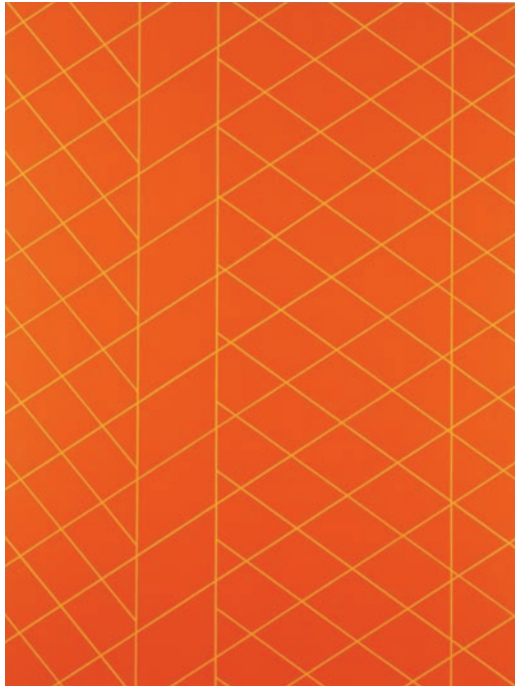
Nakamura started his career as a painter in the 1980s. He first gained recognition for his *Y Shape* motif paintings done in bold vertical brushstrokes filling a rectangular picture surface with very simple abstract forms in shapes suggesting trees, in particular the mulberry tree. The mulberry provides nourishment to silkworms and thus evokes images of Japanese culture and the Japanese environment. It also directly relates to Nakamura's identity, as his mother's family had been engaged in sericulture.

The *Diagonal Grid* series is made up of a repeated overlapping "Y" shapes. Nakamura was highly evaluated abroad for his realization of this particular sense of space, with shifting horizontal deviations rather than a fixed center point, taking as his reference the representation of lattice shutters in the illustrated hand scroll of the *Diary of Lady Murasaki* (*Murasaki Shikibu Nikki*).

The dynamic *C Opened* series Nakamura did from the 1990s sought to break step with the *Diagonal Grid* series and achieved spatial volume through use of an arc shape.



1.
Mt. Kitaokusenjo, 1985
Oil on canvas, 400×138 cm
Collection of the artist (deposited at Iwaki City Art Museum)



2.
Orange Plate
1986
Oil on cotton
240×180 cm
The National Museum of Art, Osaka



3.
Reclining Buddha I
1992-93
Oil on cotton
190×400 cm
Private collection
(deposited at Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo)

Section II

Painting as Social Semantics

Ranging Difference – Broken Shelter/ Broken Hermitage/ Saisoro/ Mourning for the Dead

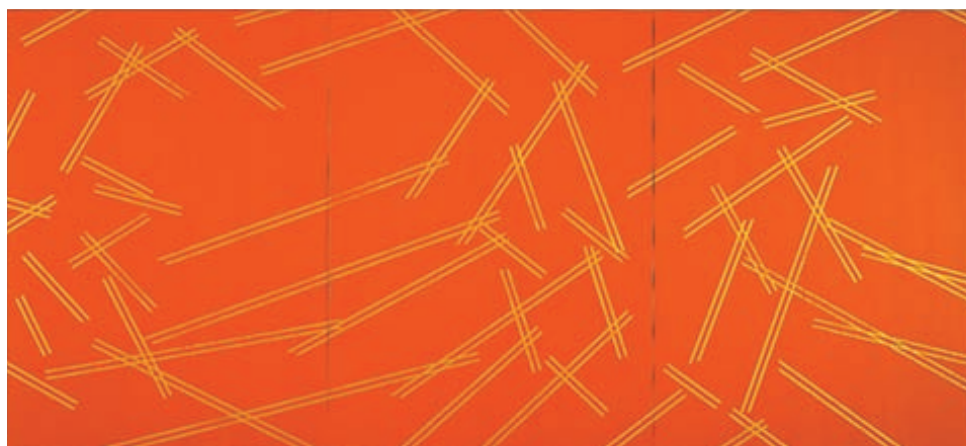
Around the beginning of the 1990s, Nakamura started thinking deeply about the social nature of painting. With the thaw in international affairs following the end of the cold war, Nakamura contemplated the function and meaning of painting and realized works that represented and were critical of increasing alienation in the world, the complex entanglement of the capitalist economic system, and oppositions between differing nationalisms and religions.

Nakamura's series *Ranging Difference – Broken Shelter* has references to the expression of disjointed architecture as depicted in the Seion-ji temple 'origins of shrines and temples' (*Seion-ji engi*) genre of paintings from the Northern and Southern Court (*Muromachi Nanboku-cho*) period. In contrast to works Nakamura had done to this point, these paintings are suffused with a sense of disquieting dynamism created by an intentional collapse of spatial continuity. The *Broken Hermitage* series that follows further advances this direction by expanding the diagonal grid spatial quality to three-dimensions, and adding a dilapidated refuge hut nestled at the mountain summit, giving them the character of, according to Nakamura's description, "paintings about all kinds of broken construction." *Saisoro* (*lit.: an old man picking a mulberry leaves*) is an ancient court dance music (*gagaku*) piece, but few will dance it because of traditionally ominous overtones signifying the imminent approach of death. The paintings in this series are suggestive of the forms of an agile dancer, and the images of an old person, a sage old man or priest in the Eastern sense, are associated with upright trees that start out as "Y" shapes. In the *Mourning for the Dead* series, Nakamura tries to realize expressions of mourning and repose of souls for all who have died in this world.

4.
Ranging Difference - Broken Shelter XI (Slanting Spirit)
2002
Acrylic on cotton
400×900 cm
Toyota Municipal Museum of Art



5.
Broken Hermitage 29 (Mt. Okuhijiri)
1997
Oil and acrylic on cotton
260.2×570 cm
Iwaki City Art Museum



7.
A Man Standing by the Purple Rapids Mourning for the Dead
2001-02
Acrylic on cotton
290.3×240.2 cm
Sezon Museum of Modern Art

Section III

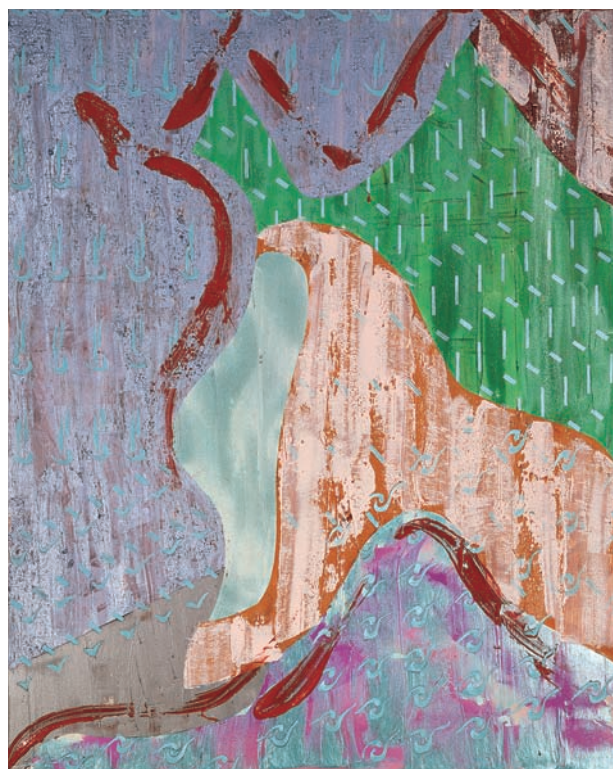
Paintings as Birds

Shokusocho (Phoenix)/ A Bird in its Existence/ Hijiri (Hermit)

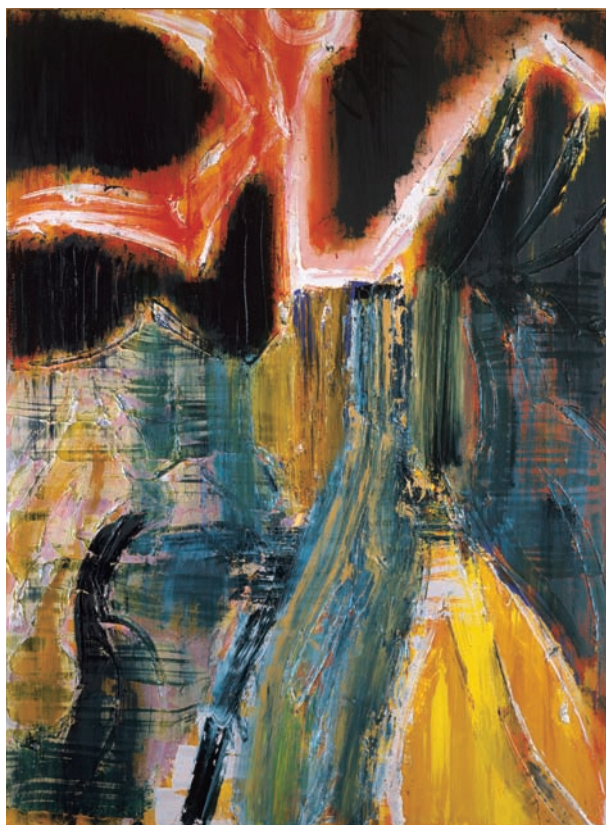
The expression 'Shokusocho' was coined by Nakamura. It is composed of a combination of the Japanese characters for 'bird' 'weaves' and 'mulberry,' and can be interpreted as the Phoenix. In the *Saisoro* and the *Mourning for the Dead* series, Nakamura deepened his thinking on the theme of death in painting, and takes on in this series the implications of death and the rebirth. From the mid-2000s Nakamura moved to the theme of 'a bird and its existence.'

Nakamura said, "The paintings in the series *A Bird in its Existence* are about flight in all existence. 'To be' means 'to fly;' only things that fly can exist." In this series, in paintings of birds, Nakamura reached what he was seeking for in the meaning of painting against the backdrop of world misery from repeated disasters, wars, and terrorism. There are more than 300 paintings in the *A Bird in its Existence* series, Nakamura's largest series to date. In this series, he created various types of paintings based on several patterns taken from prototypical bird images, such as found in Korean folk painting, Archaeopteryx (extinct early genus of birds) fossils, or in pictographs. The equation of the bird with existence that Nakamura relates may be precisely the meaning for him of painting itself.

His *Hijiri (Hermit)* series, first exhibited in 2013, is Nakamura's latest work. Buddhist sacred images that Nakamura occasionally used in paintings to date, traversing *A Bird in its Existence*, may be seen to appear as a figurative matrix.



8. *Shokusocho IV (Phoenix IV)*, 2002, acrylic, mud and galvanized foil on cotton, 300.1 × 240.2 cm, Collection of the artist



9. *A Bird in its Existence 107 (Phasianus colchicus)*, 2006, acrylic on cotton, 260.1 × 190.8 cm, The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo



10. *A Bird in its Existence 239 (Erithacus cyanurus)*, 2008-09, acrylic on cotton, 292.2 × 218 cm, Utsunomiya Museum of Art

Tickets (tax. incl.)

General: ¥1,000 (Adults) / ¥500 (College Students)

Advance: ¥800 (Adults) / ¥300 (College Students)

Group: ¥800 (Adults) / ¥300 (College Students)

*Free admission on Sat., April 19, 2014 in conjunction with "Roppongi Art Night 2014" and Sun., May 18, 2014 for International Museum Day.

*Visitors who are under 18, including high school students and disabled people with ID booklets (along with one assistant) will be admitted free.

*Tickets (both Advance and General) are available through Ticket Pia (P-Code: 765-908), and Lawson Ticket (L-Code: 36767). Service charges may apply.

*Advance tickets can be purchased through the above services from Sat., November 9, 2013 to Tue., March 18, 2014, but will only be available at the National Art Center, Tokyo from Wed., December 11, 2013 to Mon., March 17, 2014.

*Group tickets will only be available at the venue (discounts only applicable to groups of 20 or more).

*Visitors who present a ticket or ticket stub from another exhibition currently underway at the National Art Center, Tokyo, the Suntory Museum or the Mori Art Museum (the three facilities that make up the Roppongi Art Triangle) will be eligible for the group discount.

*Visitors 65 and over (ID with proof of age required) who present a ticket stub from artist's associations' exhibition held at the art center during NAKAMURA Kazumi exhibition will be admitted to the exhibition at the college-student group rate.

Related Events

Talk Event

NAKAMURA Kazumi

Date: Sat., April 26, 2014

Venue: 3F Auditorium, The National Art Center, Tokyo

Workshop

Date: Sat., May 10, 2014

*Details on related events will be released as they are finalized. For the latest information, please visit the National Art Center, Tokyo website.

Exhibition held in the same period

The Power of Images: The National Museum of Ethnology Collection

Wed., February 19 - Mon., June 9, 2014

For inquiries or more information,
please contact:

Ishimatsu (Ms.), Kikuchi (Ms.), or Kiryu (Ms.)

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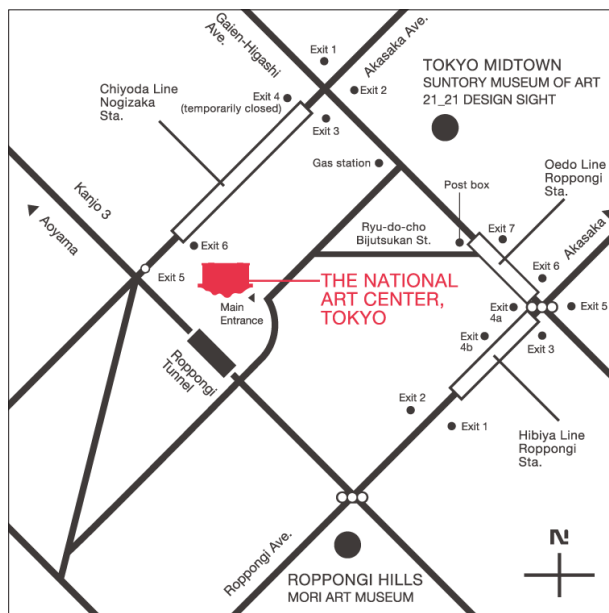
**THE
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TOKYO**

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Website: <http://www.nact.jp/>



Access

Direct access from Exit 6 (in the direction of Aoyama Cemetery) of Nogizaka Station on the Chiyoda Line of the Tokyo Metro

5-min. walk from Exit 4a of Roppongi Station on the Hibiya Line of the Tokyo Metro

4-min. walk from Exit 7 of Roppongi Station on the Toei Oedo subway line

NAKAMURA Kazumi Captions for PR Images

We are pleased to offer a number of images of the works on display to help promote the exhibition. If you would like to receive one (or more), please fill out the attached form and return it to us by fax (e-mail requests will also be honored).

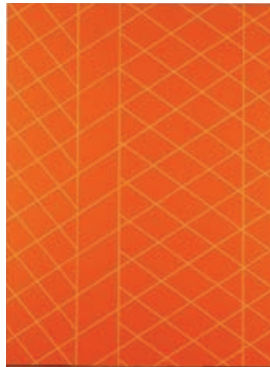
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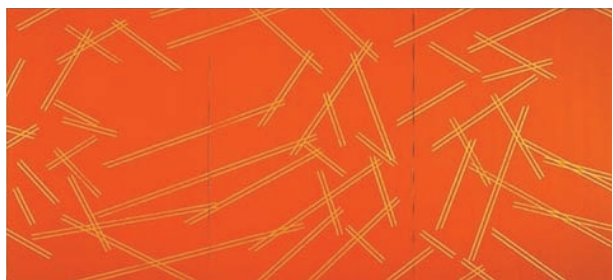
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When making use of photographs, we kindly ask that you observe the following guidelines:

- * Photos of the art works are intended only for the promotion of the exhibition. Please do not use them after the exhibition has ended.
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- * Please do not trim or superimpose text on the photos.
- * Please submit your manuscript to us by fax or e-mail before it is published, so that we can ascertain the accuracy of the factual information.
- * After the article is published, please submit a copy of your article to us. In addition, we ask that the editorial office of your publication oversee the issuing of giveaway tickets after you receive them in the mail.

For inquiries or more information, please contact:

Ishimatsu (Ms.), Kikuchi (Ms.), or Kiryu (Ms.)

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