

Exhibition

Aiko Tezuka: Dear Oblivion

September 4 to September 18, 2019, 11am-8pm

Spiral Garden (Spiral 1F)



A Study of Necessity (Satsuma-Buttons and Self-Orientalism), work in progress

Spiral is pleased to present a solo exhibition of Aiko Tezuka, titled *Dear Oblivion*, which will be held from Wednesday, September 4 to Wednesday, September 18, 2019 at Spiral Garden (Spiral 1F).

While exploring the language of painting Tezuka came to focus on textiles, and her work that employs a unique method of deconstructing and reconstructing textiles has been highly acclaimed both domestically and overseas. In recent years, she has been based in Berlin.

This is Tezuka's first solo exhibition in 12 years at Spiral Garden since her last solo show "*Thin Film, Underground Forest*" in 2007. This exhibition showcases four new pieces that emerged from her extensive investigation into the relationships between Japan and Western Europe, Art and Crafts, Modern and Contemporary, and the past and the present, as well as their encounters and bifurcations.

A Study of Necessity (Satsuma-Buttons and Self-Orientalism) deals with Satsuma buttons, which were exported from Japan to Western Europe in the late Edo period so as to satisfy the growing demand for Japanese products. *Rewoven in Kyoto* reintroduces a tablecloth woven in the Meiji period to the present. *Dear Oblivion (A study of Empress Haruko)* was inspired by a court dress worn by Empress Haruko who is known to be the first empress to have publically worn Western clothes as a symbolic gesture. And *Flowery Obscurity (The Night Watch)* references Rembrandt's *The Night Watch* and Indian "Sarasu" textiles.

All her new works have been produced in collaboration with the Kyoto Costume Institute (KCI), Kawashima Selkon Textiles, Kyoritsu Women's University Museum, and Textile Lab at Textile Museum in Tilburg, the Netherlands.

Tezuka examines Modern art and Modernity itself, posing questions both cleverly and elegantly. By using a technique that can be viewed as both 'craft-like' and 'decorative,' she challenges prevailing notions in the realm of art, where a hierarchy still exists. In this exhibition, Tezuka's new trajectory is on display.

*This exhibition has been sponsored by the Tokyu Foundation and intends to show the outcome of the Goto Memorial Cultural Award for Emerging Artists.

Major Works on Display



A Study of Necessity (Satsuma-Buttons and Self-Orientalism), work in progress

This piece has been inspired by Satsuma buttons that were made over 100 years ago and are currently held in the permanent collection of the Kyoto Costume Institute (KCI). In response to the 'Japonism' boom, the heated enthusiasm that had spread across Western Europe in the 19th century for Japanese art, crafts and aesthetics, Satsuma buttons were exported to Europe to cater for the ignited appetite. The ceramic buttons with the diameter of merely a few centimeters are swathed in beautifully rendered Japanese landscapes and women in kimonos exquisitely painted on precious white Satsuma clay. Although buttons had little practical use for kimonos in Japan, where most people still wore kimonos at that time, the buttons seem to capture the exotic image of Japan held by Westerners then. Casting a focus on the historically distinctive semiotic entanglement, Tezuka used two pieces of fabric as a point of departure; one in which Satsuma buttons are drawn and the other that has references to European buttons and was produced during the 18th and 19th century, around the same time that the former was made. After carefully unraveling the fabrics, she produced a new artwork by using the threads pulled out from them, which is presented here as an art installation.



Rewoven in Kyoto, After 100 years, Photo : Kawashima Selkon Textiles

A tablecloth woven by Kawashima Textile over 100 years ago has been reproduced by the same company, current Kawashima Selkon Textiles, specifically for this exhibition, bringing it back to life for the modern audience. The tablecloth made by the Kyoto-based Kawashima Textile has been held by the Kyoto Costume Institute (KCI), and on this occasion, it is shown at Spiral whose parent company Wacoal is headquartered in Kyoto. That is to say, this piece has revolved around the common thread of Kyoto.



Flowers Obscurity (The Night Watch), Photo © Lepkowski Studios, Berlin

Flowers Obscurity (The Night Watch) contains a reference to *The Night Watch* (1642) held in the collection of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, which shows the masterful depiction of light and shade by the 17th-century Dutch painter Rembrandt. Dark parts of the masterpiece have been replaced with the exotic patterns of an Indian Sarasa textile, signifying the fusion of painting and craft somewhat discernibly. Having received a proposition from Mr. Ching-Ling Wang, a curator at the Rijksmuseum, to develop a piece that pays homage to Rembrandt, this piece has been created as a collaborative project with him and is presented at Spiral this time prior to the forthcoming exhibition at the Rijksmuseum in 2020.



Dear Oblivion (A study of Empress Haruko) - detail
Photo © Lepkowski Studios, Berlin

Empress Haruko is known as the first empress to have worn Western clothes as a formal dress instead of a kimono, and her mantle worn as a court dress has been preserved, which is adorned with small, medium, and large chrysanthemums finely embroidered on deep green velvet fabric. Reflecting on the circumstances in which the Empress found herself then in relation to the Westernization of women's clothes in rapidly modernizing Japan, Tezuka reconstructed the historical moment by encapsulating it in a fabric that combines the intricate embroidery embellished on the velvet cloak and the two Tanka poems that the Empress composed.

Profile

Aiko Tezuka

Born in 1976 in Tokyo, Aiko Tezuka graduated from Musashino Art University with an MA and the Kyoto City University of Arts with a PhD in oil painting. In 2010, after receiving the Goto Commemorative Cultural Award for Emerging Artists, she moved to the UK. Subsequent to that, she relocated to Germany as a recipient of the Emerging Artists Overseas Training Award granted by the Agency for Cultural Affairs. Since 1997, she has produced artworks that unravel woven fabric. While referencing and appropriating historically significant objects, artifacts and works of art, she reconfigures the fabric of things by devising a unique method. Currently, she lives and works in Berlin.

Her recent exhibitions were held at Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, Fukuoka Art Museum, The National Art Center Tokyo, Hyōgo Prefectural Museum of Art, Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Textile Museum (Tilburg, the Netherlands), Johann Jacobs Museum (Zürich, Switzerland), National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (Seoul, South Korea), Turner Contemporary (Margate, UK), Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Berlin, Germany), and Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe (Hamburg, Germany).

A Message from the Artist

It has been almost 10 years since 2010 when I first moved to Europe after I received the Goto Memorial Cultural Award for Emerging Artists. It is such an honor to be given an opportunity to have a solo exhibition for the first time in 12 years at Spiral on the special occasion to present the outcome of the newcomer prize that has supported my overseas training.

Earlier, a curator at Spiral kindly introduced me to researchers in the Kyoto Costume Institute (KCI). The chance encounter prompted a new project that has culminated in this exhibition. Thanks to Tamami Suoh who works at KCI and gave me generous and copious support, I was ushered to the stories of the Meiji era that had long descended into oblivion. Hence, this new body of work was not necessarily planned prior to discovering them. In fact, after I came to know about Satsuma buttons, my focus gradually expanded into the history of Kawashima Selkon Textiles and then finally arrived at the Empress's mantle and her Tanka poems. As the journey has been smooth and rather organic, progressing from one stage to another, I felt as if I was guided by some greater force external to myself.

As it has taken such a process that has involved the help of others, without the shadow of a doubt, this show would not have been possible without the assistance of many people as well as the historical records and evidence that I was given, not to mention the enormous support I received from the curators at Spiral.

As the work had gradually developed, I began to ponder how the collection of artworks as an art exhibition could communicate its intention and the process of its development to the audience in order to play a role in society and reliably convey information that I find particularly salient. As I came to realize that there was a need for the objective and curatorial perspective of a third person who can bridge the gap between the viewer and the historical significance of the subject matters, I decided to ask Sachiko Shoji, a curator of Fukuoka Art Museum, to contextualize the show and oversee the entire process.

While we cannot reverse history materially, given the fact that in innumerable ways, incidents occurred in the Meiji era determined the course of subsequent Japanese history that even influences many of us today, I felt the urge to revisit the remarkable and yet scarcely remembered events. As I was reading about Empress Haruko's life while digging into the relevant historical accounts, there was a moment when my eyes suddenly brimmed with tears.

I was not sure whether they were sad tears or because I was touched by her life story. Nonetheless, thinking of what possibly went on behind Empress Haruko's decision to switch to Western clothes and the fact that at the same time, many foreign ambassadors allegedly said that Empress Haruko's last public appearance in kimono was fantastic, the thoughts of those historical accounts stirred up in me with a strong emotional response, and the heartfelt feeling drove me to make these works. Although I am presenting the new works in the exhibition held simultaneously in Berlin as well, given the nature of the content, I would particularly like Japanese people to come and see the exhibit at Spiral.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Tokyu Foundation, not only for the grant that I received to organize this exhibition, but also giving me the support that I needed to build my career internationally and helping me present its outcome to people in Japan.

Related Events

Opening Reception

3 September 2019, 7pm-9pm

Spiral Garden (Spiral 1F)

Artist Talk

8 September 2019, 3pm-4pm

Spiral Garden (Spiral 1F)

General Information

Aiko Tezuka: *Dear Oblivion*

Wednesday, September 4 – Wednesday, September 18, 2019, 11am – 8pm

Spiral Garden (Spiral 1F)

Admission Free

Organized by the Tokyu Foundation

Co-organized by Wacoal Art Center

Planned by Spiral

Supervised by Sachiko Shoji (Curator of Fukuoka City Art Museum)

In cooperation with Kawashima Selkon Textiles Co., Ltd., the Kyoto Costume Institute (KCI), Kyoritsu Women's University Museum, Tamami Suoh (KCI), Textile Lab at Textile Museum (Tilburg, the Netherlands), Tokyo Metropolitan Teien Art Museum, Iwao Nagasaki (Professor in the Faculty of Home Economics at Kyoritsu Women's University & Director of Kyoritsu Women's University Museum), Galerie Michael Janssen, Berlin.

Related Exhibition

Aiko Tezuka: *Flowery Obscurity*

7 September - 28 September 2019, 12pm-7pm (closed on Sundays, Mondays and 16, 23 September)

MA2 Gallery, 3-3-8 Ebisu, Shibuyaku, Tokyo

Aiko Tezuka: *Dear Oblivion*

14 September -16 November 2019, 11am-6pm (closed on Sundays, Mondays, and National Holidays)

Galerie Michael Janssen

Potsdamer Straße 63, 10785 Berlin, Germany