

LISSON GALLERY

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W

STUDIO VISIT

Masaomi Yasunaga Pushes the Limits of Ceramics, One Sculpture at a Time

The artist talks his first major U.S. exhibition, on view at ICA to coincide with Art Basel Miami Beach.



“When my grandmother died and her body was cremated, I wanted to make something to express and materialize my private thoughts and feelings,” says the Japanese artist Masaomi Yasunaga, while holding a small, delicate white urn. “As a ceramic artist, I wanted to share something with other people, so I decided to take some ashes back to the studio. I mixed them with glaze and made 20 of these to pass on to my family members.”

Yasunaga and I are virtually touring the vast studio he bought five years ago in Mie prefecture, a region of central Japan. Set against a postcard-perfect backdrop, the former wooden materials factory overlooks a valley of rice fields that stretch in narrow strips toward a mountain range. An easy eight-minute drive from his home, Yasunaga usually returns to the studio after supper with his family to continue work until midnight. “When I get tired, I just come outside and sit here and admire the view,” he says, gazing at the pastoral landscape. “The work of pottery is creation through the force of nature. It is not something I can do on my own. It is made in collaboration with nature.”



Photo by Jun Yasui

To call Yasunaga a ceramist challenges the very definition of the age-old medium. Known for avant-garde vessels that look magnificently barnacled and bio-eroded, the artist largely forgoes clay. Instead, Yasunaga often uses glaze as his primary substance, combining it with rocks, silver leaf, copper, and minerals. He submerges these objects in sand or soil to preserve their shape during kiln firing; after they have cooled, he painstakingly removes the crusted form from its casing. The result is radically contemporary—the pieces seem excavated from the lunar surface or fossil reefs.



Photo by Jun Yasui

“There is a paradoxical aspect to it,” explains Alex Gartenfeld, the director of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami. “It’s like making a painting without paint, but more complicated—more like a bronze sculpture without bronze.” Gartenfeld has curated the artist’s first major U.S. museum exhibition, *Masaomi Yasunaga: Traces of Memory*, which opened this week at the ICA to coincide with Art Basel Miami Beach. On view through March 22, the show consists of 14 pieces made from 2020 to 2024, alongside a larger, site-specific installation in which a trio of artifacts is arranged on a bed of crushed rock.



Masaomi Yasunaga, *Melting boat*, 2022
© Masaomi Yasunaga. Courtesy Lisson Gallery

Recalling his childhood in Osaka, Yasunaga, tells me that he “didn’t know there was such a thing as an artist in the world” and that “he wasn’t particularly interested in art,” but spent time sewing and building tables in his room. It wasn’t until his final year of high school, during an open campus day at Osaka Sangyo University, that he found his calling. “I saw work by Satoru Hoshino and from that moment I wanted to be a ceramic artist,” says Yasunaga. Hoshino, who would become his teacher, was a member of the Sodeisha group—which translates to “crawling through Mud Association.” Founded in mid-century Kyoto, the revolutionary artistic movement broke from the Mingei, folk-craft and traditional tea ceremony aesthetic of centuries past, by celebrating sculptural rather than functional aspects of pottery.



Photo by Jun Yasui

Even today, the historic debate of whether ceramics count as fine art rages on. “I’m not really attached to the categories that people make,” says Yasunaga. “Just as countries don’t really have clear boundaries, there is no clear boundary between ceramicists or artists, sculptures or craft.” In fact, he likens such arbitrary divisions to his own unique twist on the medium. “There is no particular boundary between materials such as clay or glaze,” he continues. “I think of them as a gradation of different materials that melt in a kiln.”

Over time, Yasunaga has steadily upscaled his creations. “The first ceramic work that impressed me by Mr. Hoshino was as big as a person,” recalls Yasunaga. “When newborn chicks first see an object, they tend to think that it’s their parent. To me, that is what ceramic art has to be, because that’s the first thing I saw.”



Photos by Jun Yasui



Photos by Jun Yasui

But the 43-year-old quickly adds, “when I was younger, I felt I didn’t really have the skills and techniques and artistic sense required to make large-scale works. Now, I feel I can challenge myself to try new things.” Indeed, the ICA exhibition features *Mosaic Vessel*, a six-and-a-half-foot totem from 2023 that symbolizes a church. “I think a lot of things are containers that can protect and preserve anything that’s important,” he explains. “The church contains people and their beliefs and religions, and what they are thinking and feeling.”



Masaomi Yasunaga, *Melting Vessel*, 2023
© Masaomi Yasunaga. Courtesy Lisson Gallery

These monumental works require a bit more planning than his smaller, instinct-driven pieces. “I tend to draw something to outline, using pencils or watercolors,” he says, fanning a collection of sketches. I notice that some are a bold hue, a contrast to his minimalist metallic range. “Originally, I wasn’t thinking so deeply about the use of color,” Yasunaga muses. “But one day I realized that colors can give a very different character to each artwork. So, I often pick up a piece and think about what kind of color or character this piece is, and then I choose one for them.”



Photos by Jun Yasui

Hypebeast
31 October 2025

HYPEBEAST



All the Artists Participating in the 15th Shanghai Biennale

"Does the flower hear the bee?" opens this November.

Summary

- The 15th Shanghai Biennale, titled "Does the flower hear the bee?" opens November 8, 2025, at the Power Station of Art
- The exhibition features over 250 works by 67 artists/collectives and focuses on the intersection of human and "more-than-human" intelligence
- Notable featured artists include Theaster Gates, Huang Yongping, Rirkrit Tiravanija, and Haegue Yang

The Power Station of Art has announced the official artist list for the 15th Shanghai Biennale, titled "Does the flower hear the bee?" Set to open to the public on November 8, 2025, this edition will feature over 250 works by 67 individual artists and collectives from around the globe.

Chief Curator Kitty Scott and the curatorial team have centered the exhibition on recent scientific discoveries about the interactions between different life forms. Taking inspiration from the idea of a flower “hearing” a bee’s wings, the Biennale aims to function at the intersection of various intelligence models, encompassing both human and nonhuman forms. This approach is rooted in the belief that contemporary art provides a vital space for these investigations, creating an interconnected sphere where communities can strengthen their bonds with what is termed “the more-than-human world”.

Amid global uncertainty, the exhibition offers potential pathways out of despair, exploring emergent forms of life and new modes of sensorial communication. The extensive list of participating artists includes Theaster Gates, Huang Yongping, Rirkrit Tiravanija, and Haegue Yang. Certain artists, such as Gates and Tiravanija, will also be featured in the Biennale’s City Projects at venues like the Jia Yuan Hai Art Museum.

Check out the full list of participating artists below. The 15th Shanghai Biennale opens November 8.

Participating artists (listed in alphabetical order by last name):

Kim Adams, Abbas Akhavan, Allora & Calzadilla, Francis Alÿs, Ryoko Aoki, Carmen Argote, Shuvinai Ashoona, Alvaro Barrington, Lêna Bùi, Tania Candiani, Maxime Cavajani, Carolina Caycedo, Chen Ruofan, Cheng Xinhao, Sara Cwynar, Dan Er, Rohini Devasher, Miguel Fernández de Castro, Cristina Flores Pescorán, Theaster Gates, Abraham González Pacheco, Brett Graham, Hao Liang, d harding, Ho Tzu Nyen, Ngahina Hohaia, Hu Xiaoyuan, Huang Yongping, Ulala Imai, Aki Inomata, Brian Jungen, Lotus L. Kang, Amar Kanwar, Christine Sun Kim, Ragnar Kjartansson, Jaffa Lam, Lina Lapelyté, Liu Shuai, Sharon Lockhart, Liz Magor, Gordon Matta-Clark, Ari Benjamin Meyers, Audie Murray, Kosen Ohtsubo, Christian Kōun Alborz Oldham, Lisa Oppenheim, Plant South Salesroom, Qiu Shihua, R. H. Quaytman, Walid Raad, Shao Chun, Shao Fan, Heji Shin, Tan Jing, Shannon Te Ao, Luke Willis Thompson, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Gözde Mimiko Türkkan, Hajra Waheed, Evelyn Taocheng Wang, Xu Tiantian, Ami Yamasaki, Haegue Yang, Masaomi Yasunaga, Cansu Yıldırın, Gozo Yoshimasu, Zhou Tao

Art Plugged
24 November 2025

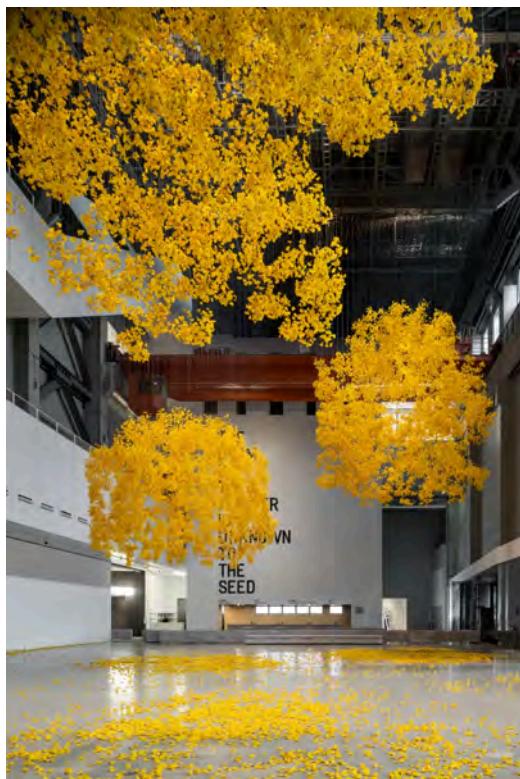
ART PLUGGED™

Does the Flower Hear the Bee? The 15th Shanghai Biennale Begins With a Question

— Art Plugged Art News Exhibitions November 24, 2025

A citywide edition of the 15th Shanghai Biennale brings new curatorial voices, expanded public sites including the Jia Yuan Hai Art Museum, and a dynamic programme of performances, workshops, and discussions across Shanghai.

The Power Station of Art will open ***Does the flower hear the bee?*** the **15th Shanghai Biennale** on 8 November 2025. The **exhibition** brings together an international curatorial team led by Chief Curator **Kitty Scott**, working with **Co-curators Daisy Desrosiers** and **Xue Tan. Curators Long Yitang** and **Zhang Yingying**, both selected through PSA's Emerging Curators Project, join the team, signalling the Biennale's ongoing commitment to nurturing new voices in contemporary art.



Allora & Calzadilla, Penumbra and Phantom Forest at the 15th Shanghai Biennale, Does the flower hear the bee?, 2025, Power Station of Art. ©Allora & Calzadilla.

Courtesy of the artist, Lisson Gallery, Galerie Chantal Crousel, and Kurimanzutto. Image courtesy of Power Station of Art.

The exhibition design is led by all(zone) / **Rachaporn Choochuey**. Graphic designer **Sara De Bondt** and editor **Sarah Demeuse** shape the visual and textual identity of the **Biennale**, ensuring a coherent language across architecture, print, and publishing.

This edition extends beyond the museum to several of Shanghai's most recognisable public and cultural sites. City Projects will be presented across **Jia Yuan Hai Art Museum**, VILLA tbh, Shanghai, the Penjing Garden of the Shanghai Botanical Garden, and klee klee & friends. The dispersed format invites audiences to experience contemporary art within the city's botanical, domestic, and architectural landscapes, positioning the Biennale as a broader urban collaboration.

Opening week at the Power Station of Art will feature performances, roundtable discussions, artist-led workshops, and lectures. The programme offers audiences direct encounters with artists and thinkers shaping current conversations in sculpture, installation, and experimental practice. The Biennale continues its role as one of Asia's most influential platforms for global contemporary art, foregrounding new forms of cultural collaboration while grounding its work within the fabric of Shanghai itself.



Installation view of Francis Alÿs, Children's Game #30: lmbu, D.R.Congo, Children's Game #52: Boy and Bell, Mexico, and Children's Game #44: Uárhukua, Mexico at the 15th Shanghai Biennale Does the flower hear the bee?, 2025, Power Station of Art. All works courtesy of the artist.

Image courtesy of Power
Station of Art.

Exhibition Theme: Does the flower hear the bee?

Like the flower that “hears” the bee’s wings, the 15th Shanghai Biennale positions itself at the meeting point of human and nonhuman forms of intelligence. The curatorial framework rests on the conviction that contemporary art offers a rare environment for this inquiry: a space where embodied experience and shared attention can open new ways of relating to what the curators describe as “the more-than-human world.”

The Biennale emerges in a period marked by volatility and overlapping crises. Rapid shifts in technology, climate, and global politics have produced a sense of disorientation that feels difficult to escape. While there is no route back to familiar ground, the exhibition proposes that art can help us navigate the present, offering glimpses of new forms of life and alternative modes of communication that might take shape within moments of instability.

Developed in conversation with artists, curators, writers, musicians, poets, and scientists, *Does the flower hear the bee?* underscores how much depends on our ability to sense our surroundings and to recognise the varied intelligences that inhabit them. Its optimism lies in art’s capacity to help us face an uncertain future with greater attentiveness, and to imagine relationships that move beyond the strictly human.



Left: Kosen Ohtsubo, Linga Shanghai, 2025, black-coated binding wire, soil, organic mulch, weeping willow branches, winged spindle, discarded flowers, scrap metal, secondhand clothes, rebar.

Courtesy of the artist. Right: Christian Kōun Alborz Oldham, Terminalia (Incense Clock), 2025, fabric cushion, incense sticks, polyurethane binder, turmeric, 125 days. Courtesy of the artist.

Image courtesy of Power Station of Art.

67 Participating Artists and Collectives from Around the World

This edition of the Biennale will feature over 250 works by 67 individual artists and collectives from around the world, including 16 from China. Over 30 works are commissioned or new.

Participating artists (listed in alphabetical order by last name): Kim Adams, Abbas Akhavan, Allora & Calzadilla, Francis Alÿs, Ryoko Aoki, Carmen Argote, Shuvinai Ashoona, Alvaro Barrington, Lêna Bùi, Tania Candiani, Maxime Cavajani, Carolina Caycedo, Chen Ruofan, Cheng Xinhao, Sara Cwynar, Dan Er, Rohini Devasher, Miguel Fernández de Castro, Cristina Flores Pescorán, Theaster Gates, Abraham González Pacheco, Brett Graham, Hao Liang, d harding, Ho Tzu Nyen, Ngahina Hohaia, Hu Xiaoyuan, Huang Yongping, Ulala Imai, Aki Inomata, Brian Jungen, Lotus L. Kang, Amar Kanwar, Christine Sun Kim, Ragnar Kjartansson, Jaffa Lam, Lina Lapelyté, Liu Shuai, Sharon Lockhart, Liz Magor, Gordon Matta-Clark, Ari Benjamin Meyers, Audie Murray, Kosen Ohtsubo, Christian Kōun Alborz Oldham, Lisa Oppenheim, Plant South Salesroom, Qiu Shihua, R. H. Quaytman, Walid Raad, Shao Chun, Shao Fan, Heji Shin, Tan Jing, Shannon Te Ao, Luke Willis Thompson, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Gözde Mimiko Türkkan, Hajra Waheed, Evelyn Taocheng Wang, Xu Tiantian, Ami Yamasaki, Haegue Yang, Masaomi Yasunaga, Cansu Yıldırın, Gozo Yoshimasu, Zhou Tao

* **Maxime Cavajani** and **Theaster Gates** participate in the Biennale's City Project at the Jia Yuan Hai Art Museum. The works of **Rirkrit Tiravanija**, Chen Ruofan, and Zhou Tao are on display at both the Power Station of Art and the Biennale's City Project at the Jia Yuan Hai Art Museum. Liu Shuai participates in the Biennale's City Project at the Jia Yuan Hai Art Museum and VILLA tbh, Shanghai.

Does the Flower Hear the Bee? The 15th Shanghai Biennale opens on the 8th of November, 2025 until the 31st of March, 2026 at Jia Yuan Hai Art Museum

[Learn more](#)

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Wall Street Journal
26 December 2025

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

'Masaomi Yasunaga: Traces of Memory' Review: Reinventing Ceramic Art

At the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, the Japanese artist exhibits his unique process where glaze, not clay, is used as a structural element to create rough and craggy sculptures.



Masaomi Yasunaga's 'Melting Vessel' (2023). Lisson Gallery

Miami

It's a rare thing to break new technical ground in any art form—especially one that's tens of thousands of years old. Yet Masaomi Yasunaga does just that with his sculptures that draw on Japanese pottery traditions while transforming the creative process through a daring inversion. Stoneware, from high-art jasperware works to the humble dining plates on our kitchen shelves, is always formed from clay then decorated using glazes and other materials. Mr. Yasunaga, however, forms his creations out of glaze and other ornaments, then buries the objects in sand or unrefined clay to fire them.



'Fused Vessels' (2023). Lisson Gallery

The results of this reversal, where glaze becomes structural and kaolin (a primary component in clay) becomes decorative, are craggy forms that look like they've just been unearthed from a volcanic landscape or dredged up from the depths of some ancient wreck. This impression is echoed in the act of creation itself, in which Mr. Yasunaga excavates his works from the substrate in which they've been fired, never knowing what the final result will be until the fragile pieces have been freed from their resting places. Visitors to the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami are given an introduction to this singular process in "Masaomi Yasunaga: Traces of Memory," the artist's first major U.S. museum exhibition.

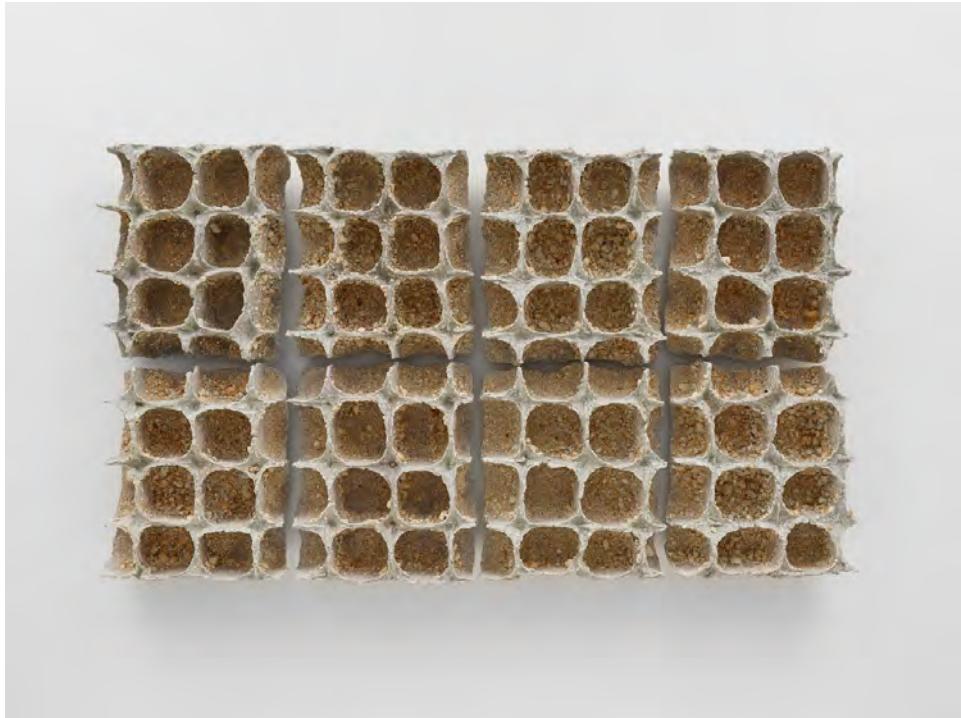
There are many vessels here that nod to a variety of traditional pottery forms—vases, urns, bowls and kraters whose organic surfaces are embedded with granite, chunks of kaolin and tiles, and accented with underglaze, colored slip, oxides and flecks of silver leaf. The massive "Melting Vessel" (2023) looks like an oversize tea bowl that's about to collapse in on itself, its flaky surface covered in kiln wash—a utilitarian liquid normally used to coat the shelves of a kiln to prevent objects from sticking but here employed as a material in its own right. "Fused Vessels" (2023) are a pair of connected amphorae, crusted conjoined twins in a light pink and baby blue.



‘Melting Boat’ (2022). Lisson Gallery

Mr. Yasunaga trained under Satoru Hoshino, a follower of the Sodeisha movement, which reacted against the dominant Japanese styles of the 1960s and beyond that focused on functionality and folk aesthetics. No one could accuse Mr. Yasunaga’s works of being functional: “Melting Boat” (2022), for example, is a sarcophagus-like container in two parts that would sink faster than the Titanic if anyone tried to put it out to sea. But its shape, though haunting, is also oddly inviting, bringing to mind stone troughs and thirsty animals.

The most striking piece here is the wall-size “Skeleton of a Box” (2022), a series of protruding voids that could be mistaken for a primordial egg carton used by giants, or the empty hive chambers of some Jurassic insect. It’s a study in negative space, each individual form offering a grainy aperture that holds our interest due to the minor similarities to and differences from the ones surrounding it. Arranged in a series of eight sections, the work has space between each panel, which gives a lightness to the otherwise dense construction, making it seem to hover ever so slightly off the wall.



'Skeleton of a Box' (2022). Lisson Gallery



'Mosaic Vessel' (2023). Lisson Gallery

Some mosaics depicting various pieces of pottery are less engaging than the sculptural works, but that method is deployed more successfully in “Mosaic Vessel” (2023). A pair of urns stacked on top of each other, the work has a surface with

vertical rows of tiles, giving it a more polished feel than many of Mr. Yasunaga's other sculptures. This doesn't make it feel apart from the rest of the show, though, and instead doubles down on the archaeological themes present in the artist's work, making us think of grandly decorated Roman floors and age-old roads. It's a reminder that for all the radical invention visible in these sculptures, tradition is never far off.

Masaomi Yasunaga: *Traces of Memory*
Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, through March 22, 2026

Miami Living
6 November 2025

MIAMI
LIVING

Nov 6

Masaomi Yasunaga: 記憶の足跡 |traces of Memory

ICA Miami is pleased to present the first major US museum exhibition for the Japanese ceramicist Masaomi Yasunaga.

Emotive, highly textured, and otherworldly, Yasunaga's works open up new possibilities for his chosen medium, interpreting modern avant-garde ceramics with a radically contemporary approach. This exhibition comprises recent works and a site-specific installation, highlighting the dynamic interdisciplinarity of Yasunaga's innovative approach to material transformation.



Artist: Masaomi Yasunaga

Artwork Title: 熔ける器 I Melting Vessel, 2023

Materials: Glaze, slip, clay, kiln wash, iron, kaolin, silver leaf

Dimensions: 36 5/8 x 39 3/4 x 39 inches

Courtesy of: Lisson Gallery and Nonaka-Hill

Yasunaga was trained by Satoru Hoshino, a third-generation proponent of the Sodeisha movement, which sought to innovate new techniques and sculptural forms, eschewing the functionality and aesthetics of traditional folk art. Yasunaga creates ceramics using a traditional Tebineri hand-building; in lieu of clay, he uses glazes, as well as unconventional mixtures of glaze and minerals, rocks, metals, and glass powders. To preserve the forms during firing, Yasunaga buries them in sand or unrefined porcelain inside large kilns. Once fired, the resulting forms are removed from layers of material, a process the artist likens to archaeological excavation.

Masaomi Yasunaga (b. 1982, Osaka) lives and works in Iga-shi, Mie Prefecture, Japan. He has a master's degree in environmental design from Osaka Sangyo University. Recent exhibitions include 即興游离：陶瓷新傾向 (Impromptu Drift: New Tendencies in Ceramics), at UCCA Clay, Yixing, Jiangsu Province, China (2025); "In Holding Close" at Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Arts, Auburn (2023); and "Masaomi Yasunaga: A Shadow of the Eternity," at Utsuwakan, Kyoto, Japan (2019). His work is featured in the permanent collections of the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art, Auburn, Alabama; Musée Ariana, Geneva, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

“Masaomi Yasunaga: 記憶の足跡 | Traces of Memory” is organized by the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, and curated by Alex Gartenfeld, Irma and Norman Braman Artistic Director, and Amanda Morgan, Associate Curator.

Dec 2, 2025 – Mar 22, 2026

Ground Floor / Janice and Alan Lipton Gallery

Ground Floor / Ray Ellen and Allan Yarkin Gallery

By ML Staff. Courtesy of Institute of Contemporary Art Miami

LISSON GALLERY

Axios Miami
24 November 2025

Nov 24, 2025 - Culture

Miami Art Week guide: Some of the top art fairs to visit



Martin Vassolo, Sommer Brugal

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"Penetrable" (1992) by Jesús Rafael Soto, which will be on view at Art Basel Miami Beach. Photo: Courtesy of Galería RGR, Mexico. © Jesús R. Soto/ADAGP, Paris 2025

While most cities are busy setting up holiday decor, in South Beach — home to Art Basel — a series of hot-pink inflatable characters have begun to pop up along rooftops in Lincoln Road.

- "Mr. Pink Takes Flight," by French artist Philippe Katerine, is one of the first public art installations marking the start of the city's annual arts celebration.

Why it matters: Miami Art Week, which begins Dec. 1, is headlined by Art Basel, but there are dozens of other art fairs, public exhibits and concerts that help transform Miami-Dade County into a giant paint party.



"Mr. Pink Takes Flight" by Philippe Katerine on Lincoln Road. Photos: Courtesy of Angelo Lanza

To help you make a plan, we compiled some of this year's best events.

•• **Between the lines:** This list isn't exhaustive. We'll be hyping more happenings as we get closer to Day 1.

Art Basel

Miami's biggest art fair features 283 leading galleries from 43 countries across five continents.

- The fair, now in its 23rd year, is divided into four core sectors, ranging from monumental pieces to solo presentations from emerging artists.
- New this year: The Cuban art gallery El Apartamento will make Art Basel history as the first gallery founded on the island to participate.
- Basel is also debuting a digital art sector called Zero 10, which features 12 international exhibitors.

Pro tip: Art Basel is massive, so get there early and grab a map to track your progress. You will want to stay here all day, if the big crowds don't overwhelm you.

- Dec. 5-7
- Single-day tickets [\\$88](#)
- Miami Beach Convention Center



"She Was Not Gold, 2023" by Lonnie Holley, which will be on display at Art Basel Miami Beach. © Lonnie Holley; Courtesy of Edel Assanti; Photo: Sebastiano Luciano

Art Miami + Context Art Miami

Art Miami, which is celebrating its 35th year, says it's the city's original and longest-running contemporary art fair — and the second-most popular.

- This year, it boasts 160 international galleries across 24 countries.
- Last year, we [highlighted some quirky pieces](#) here, like "Bang-nana," a banana-shaped grenade that poked fun at the 2019 banana art "Comedian" by Maurizio Cattelan.
- Context Art Miami is Art Miami's sister fair, dedicated to the development and reinforcement of emerging and mid-career artists.

Pro tip: If you don't want to deal with South Beach traffic, Art Miami is a good option. The food was also better here last year.

- Dec. 2-7
- Single-day tickets [\\$68](#)
- One Herald Plaza, downtown Miami

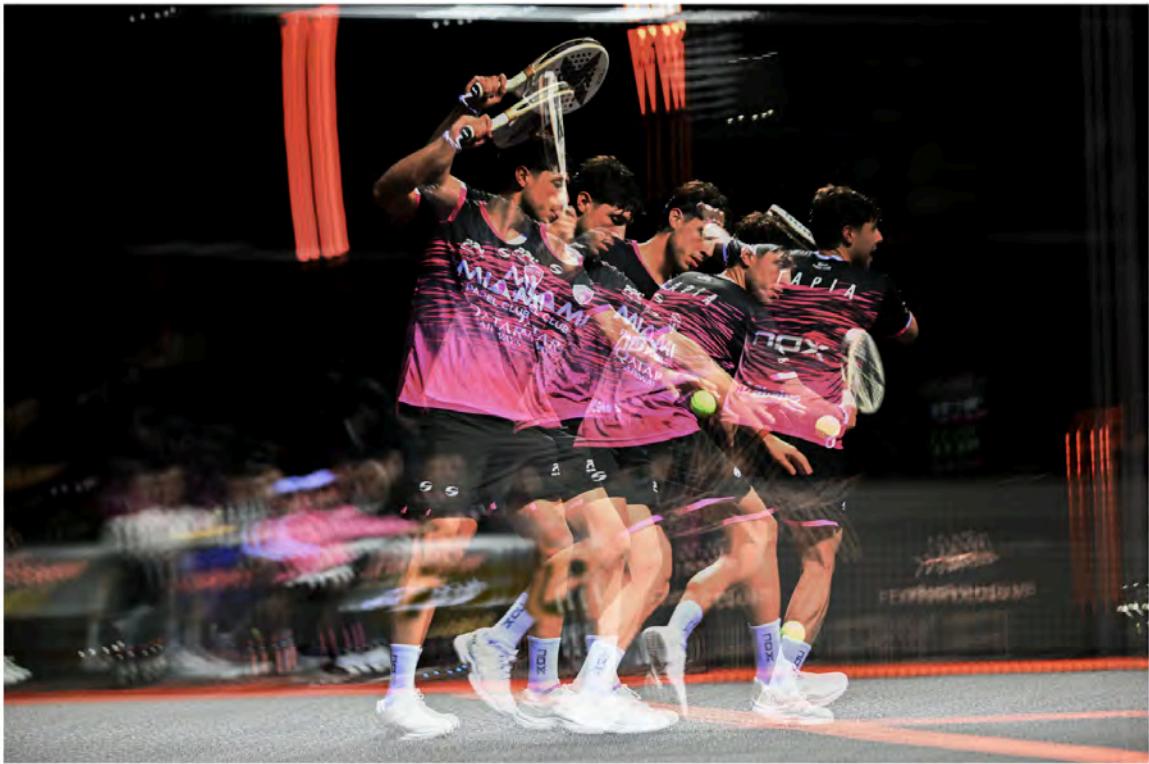


Photo: Courtesy of Pro Padel League

Scope Art Show

Does it get more Miami than a padel match at an art fair? Scope and the [Pro Padel League](#) are hosting exhibition matches on a court painted by artist Ryan Keeley.

- There will be celebrity matches Dec. 4 from 5pm-7pm and a sunset DJ celebration Dec. 7.

Scope's art lineup features over 80 international galleries with a focus on emerging artists.

- Dec. 3-7
- Single-day tickets \$71+
- 801 Ocean Drive, Miami Beach

Untitled Art Fair

Untitled Art Fair — Scope's South Beach neighbor — is known for its hot-pink entrance.

- This year's fair will feature [160 exhibitors](#) from galleries — and, for the first time, nonprofits — representing 29 countries and territories.
- Alongside paintings and sculptures, Untitled has live performance art. Last year, we watched artist [Chanel Matsunami Govreau](#) drag sandals tied to cinderblocks around the fair in a hypnotizing performance called "[Situational Awareness](#)."

Pro tip: There's nothing like checking out the art at Untitled and stepping outside onto their oceanfront terrace to eat lunch. Last year, the tacos were amazing.

- This is a more intimate alternative to Art Basel.
- Dec. 3–7
- [Tickets here](#)
- On Miami Beach at Ocean Drive and 12th Street

NADA Miami

The long-running downtown Miami fair highlights rising talent from around the world.

- The nonprofit New Art Dealers Alliance (NADA) is seen as an incubator for up-and-coming galleries. This year, 11 galleries that showed at NADA Miami 2024 are making the jump to Art Basel, according to [ARTNews](#).
- NADA Miami 2025 will showcase nearly 140 galleries, art spaces, and nonprofit organizations spanning 30 countries.
- The fair will also have a banana-based soft-serve vendor called Banana Daddy, a nod to Basel's favorite fruit.
- Dec. 2–6
- [Tickets here](#)
- Ice Palace Studios in Miami (free shuttles available from Venetian Marina & Yacht Club)

Pinta Miami

The only fair specializing in Latin American art will feature 35 international galleries.

- Unique to Pinta, the fair lists the price ranges for its pieces online. The most affordable artwork you can buy is this [\\$500 porcelain piece](#).
- Another curiosity: Argentine artist Nicola Costantino will set up a mock flower kiosk and offer attendees ceramic flowers from her "Pardes" line as part of a [special project](#).
- Dec. 4-7
- Early-bird tickets [\\$33+](#)
- The Hangar, Coconut Grove

Red Dot Miami + Spectrum Miami

- **Red Dot Miami** is a "curated, gallery-only contemporary fair," a spokesperson says.
- **Spectrum Miami** highlights up-and-coming artists
- Dec. 4-7
- Early-bird tickets [\\$32+](#)
- Mana Wynwood

Other events

👉 The [Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami](#) is unveiling five solo presentations for its winter 2025 season beginning Dec. 2, including debut U.S. solo shows for Andreas Schulze and Masaomi Yasunaga.

- Miami Design District
- **Tribeca Festival:** The festival is back with Bogotá-based and Latin Grammy-nominated ensemble Monsieur Periné and instrumental duo Hermanos Gutiérrez.
- Dec. 5-6
- Tickets: [\\$42+](#) for Monsieur Periné; [\\$70+](#) for Hermanos Gutiérrez.
- Miami Beach Bandshell

⌚ **Brave New Earth at the Ritz-Carlton South Beach:** [PartNYC](#) is hosting a digital-forward beachfront experience with "AI-generated visions of the future," high-tech art, electronic music, live theater and futuristic set design.

- Dec. 2-7
- [Tickets \\$44+](#)
- South Beach

👉 **\$25 Dollar Art Show:** Hit up Toe Jam Backlot for an art experience where every original piece is priced at \$25 and measures 36 square inches or less.

- Dec. 3-6
- Wynwood

➡ **The Bishop Gallery and the Moore Miami** will showcase photographer Alexis Adler's rarely seen archive of the late artist Jean-Michel Basquiat from 1979 to 1980.

- "Emerging and Beyond" runs Dec. 4-8.
- Free with RSVP
- 12-4pm
- The Moore, Miami Design District

Artsy
15 May 2025

Art

Why “Ugly” Ceramics Are So Appealing

Maxwell Rabb

May 15, 2025 6:08PM

✉️ 🌐



Brian Rochefort
Falcon, 2025
Sean Kelly Gallery
Sold

Brian Rochefort
Erratic Pattern, 2024
Sean Kelly Gallery
Price on request

“People want to touch it,” Thomas Kelly, director at [Sean Kelly Gallery](#) in Los Angeles, told Artsy, describing Brian Rochefort’s *Falcon* (2025)—one of three sculptures prominently featured in the gallery’s booth at [Frieze Los Angeles](#) in February. This visceral ceramic work is a riot of erupting textures and cracked glazes in lavender, teal, and rust, calling to mind an alien terrain. It’s typical of Rochefort’s practice, which encompasses sculptures and vessels that Kelly said feel “like they’re living, breathing.”.

Rochefort’s work reflects a wider aesthetic trend: deformed and unpolished ceramics that ooze, rupture, and revel in disorder. These works, which could be described—admiringly or not—as “ugly,” lean deliberately into what clay vessels have historically avoided: collapse, asymmetry, and excess. While their rough edges feel like a reaction to the slickness of much contemporary minimalist design, they aren’t entirely novel. “Ugly” ceramics do, however, speak to a notably of-the-moment desire to subvert history and welcome imperfection.

Embracing the grotesque



George E. Ohr
Bisque Vase, 1906
Guild Gallery
Sold



Peter Voulkos
Abstract Sculpture
Jeffrey Spahn Gallery
Price on request

The experimental underpinnings of today's "ugly" ceramics can be traced back over a century. In Mississippi in the 1890s, George Ohr, the self-proclaimed "Mad Potter of Biloxi," twisted and pinched his vessels into wild forms that defied convention. By the mid-20th century, Peter Voulkos was pushing the medium even further, tearing open pottery and channeling the energy of Abstract Expressionism into slabs, gashes, and stacked forms.

That unruly energy is carried forward by contemporary ceramicists like Kathy Butterly, known for her crumpled porcelain works, and Takuro Kuwata, whose innovative glaze techniques produce exploding forms. Such artists are visible in both commercial and institutional settings. For instance, Kuwata was the subject of a recent solo show at Salon 94 in New York. Shozo Michikawa's hulking, abrasive clay forms took the shape of a teapot exhibited by Loewe at this year's Salone del Mobile in Milan, and Masaomi Yasunaga's cracked, lumpy vessels were on view in Lisson Gallery's Art Basel Hong Kong 2025 booth. Meanwhile, "Monstrous Beauty: A Feminist Revision of Chinoiserie," on view at The Metropolitan Museum of Art through August 17th, features Yeesookyung's glittering, malformed assemblages, pieced together from broken porcelain using *kintsugi* (a Japanese method of repairing pottery with gold).



Yeesookyung
Translated Vase, 2023 TVCIW1, 2023
MASSIMODECARLO
Inquire about availability



Masaomi Yasunaga
熔る壺 Melting vessel, 2022
Nonaka-Hill
US\$9,000

These works make a clear counterpoint to the restraint exhibited by some contemporary ceramicists like [Ron Nagle](#) and [Ken Price](#), whose comparatively streamlined forms have shaped a market for sleek, colorful ceramics. Instead, today's "ugly" ceramics provoke discomfort—which, for many collectors, is precisely the point. In an era of curated surfaces and algorithmic smoothness, these fractured, unstable forms feel more emotionally direct.

"The grotesque speaks to the human condition; it's more honest," said art advisor Rebecca Ryba. "Everything's so false, and we're living in a world of narcissism, vanity, filters, and bullshit, and it's not real. And so there's a pull towards realness. The grotesque, the ugly, and the deformed are quite beautiful, and some of my clients see that, too."

Why ceramicists break from tradition



Steven Young Lee
Brown Moon Jar 2, 2024
Duane Reed Gallery
US\$15,800

"Learn the rules like a pro, so you can break them like an artist." That oft-cited aphorism, attributed to [Pablo Picasso](#), captures the spirit of many contemporary ceramists who are trained in classical techniques but intentionally deviate from them. The choice to make work that slumps and ruptures is often about shifting the terms of beauty itself.

Ideals of simplicity, precision, and flawlessness in ceramics are rooted in centuries of East Asian traditions, including the elegant stoneware of the Song dynasty in China and the technically advanced celadon ceramics of Korea's Goryeo dynasty. These traditions have influenced the minimalist aesthetic popular in ceramics today. But many artists choose to push in the opposite direction. For instance, Korean American artist [Steven Young Lee](#), who is trained in traditional porcelain techniques, creates works that appear to explode or sag mid-firing. "Intentionally deconstructing vessels recalibrates notions of classical perfection and beauty and seeks to critique ideas of failure and expectation, craft skill, and the innate value of an object," he said in an [artist statement](#).



Sarah Pschorn
Pirates Gospel, 2021
Galerie Laetitia Gorsy
Sold



Yeesookyung
Translated Vase, 2011
Korean Artist Project

At the Met, “Monstrous Beauty: A Feminist Revision of Chinoiserie” traces how 18th-century Europe’s obsession with imported Chinese porcelain—and its imitation through chinoiserie—shaped enduring fantasies about femininity and race. Porcelain’s fragility became a metaphor for women: prized, decorative, and easily broken. In response, contemporary Asian and Asian American women, including Yeesookyung, reclaim the medium to recast porcelain’s loaded history through a feminist lens. In her “translated vases,” the Korean artist fuses broken shards of porcelain into bulbous, gold-laced sculptures that reject the dainty perfection once fetishized by the West, instead embracing rupture and recomposition as forms of strength and beauty.

Other artists are motivated by a desire to bring historical traditions into conversation with contemporary motifs and ideas. That impulse is present in the work of German artist Sarah Pschorn. Her vessels are inspired by the opulence of Baroque design, particularly porcelain produced by Meissen—a manufacturer established in Germany in 1710, known for ornamental designs influenced by East Asian ceramics. Pschorn’s “Copy and Paste” series channels this historical predecessor, but uses deformed surfaces, found objects, and technology like 3D printing to update the forms while referencing contemporary themes like digital culture and wellness. “There is the artist’s desire for creative freedom—to push the limits of the material and challenge traditional forms,” said Laetitia Gorsy, the Leipzig, Germany-based gallerist who represents Pschorn.



Johannes Nagel
White Twist, 2018
Brutto Gusto
€12,000



Shozo Michikawa
Natural Ash Sculptural Form, 2020
Hostler Burrows x HB381
Price on request

While much of this “ugly” work may appear clumsily constructed, these artists’ aesthetic choices should not be interpreted as a lack of technical sophistication. Beneath the sensory overload of Brian Rochefort’s work, for example, is a rigorous understanding of the material. “It’s freedom in the form,” said Kelly. “His use of color, his understanding of different techniques, the way he incorporates pieces that might fall off in the firing process and puts them back into the sculpture...We were incredibly drawn to the work and saw where it could go.”

Cracks, fingerprints, and the human touch



Nitsa Meletopoulos, installation view of "Grotto-Modo" at Galerie Laetitia Gory, 2022. Courtesy of Galerie Laetitia Gory.

In an era defined by mass production and high-tech precision, handmade ceramics offer something increasingly rare: evidence of the maker's touch. Cracks, fingerprints, and uneven glaze—qualities some might consider flaws—are now seen as markers of authenticity.

German artist [Johannes Nagel](#) works exclusively with porcelain, one of the most unforgiving ceramic materials. His process is both methodical and unruly: He creates molds out of compacted sand, which he fills with liquid clay to cast his vessels. This process is highly irregular, sometimes producing massive holes and breakages in the final products. Some works, such as *White Twist* (2018), appear weather-beaten, with unpolished surfaces pocked with holes and fingerprints. "Sometimes, these pieces accumulate character and a beauty that grows from the struggle rather than immediate serendipity," Nagel told Artsy. "My intention is not the perfection of the ultimate expression; it is to articulate a concept of the evolution of things." For collectors, he added, that visible struggle becomes a metaphor for life.

This resistance to replication lies at the heart of many artists' motivations. "Grotesque ceramics, in particular, cannot be replicated by molds. It is the artist's hand that speaks to us directly," Gorsy told Artsy. She views ceramics made in this style as a powerful counterpoint to "contemporary issues, particularly AI, automation, and digitalization."



Shozo Michikawa
Shino Stratum Sculpture Form (#022997), 2024
Japan Art - Galerie Friedrich Mueller
€10,000–€15,000



Masaomi Yasunaga
Fused Vessels, 2023
Public Gallery
Price on request

For Japanese artist Shozo Michikawa, this ethos marks a direct departure from his own professional history. After years of working in a ceramic factory, he abandoned industrial production to develop a technique of twisting dense clay on a wheel, creating forms resembling burnt wood, cracked stone, or geological fault lines. Michikawa's practice reflects his reverence for nature and its dominance over humans, a viewpoint at odds with the very nature of industry.

"Perfection of form and execution is not something that is tantamount to success, necessarily," said Juliet Burrows, co-founder of New York gallery Hostler Burrows, which frequently works with Michikawa. "Something that shows that someone was struggling or was imparting something about their daily ritual, their daily thoughts and ideas—you can feel that in the clay."

Why art buyers are falling for “ugly” ceramics



Brian Rochefort
Paint Can, 2024
MASSIMODECARLO
US\$1,600



Johannes Nagel
Cuts #12, 2022
Brutto Gusto
€9,000

For Hollywood producer and art collector Michael Sherman, the appeal of Rochefort's work was immediate. "It looked like a colorful volcano, an eruption of clay," he said, telling Artsy that after encountering the work for the first time at [Diane Rosenstein Gallery](#) in Los Angeles, he felt magnetized by it. "I don't necessarily think a ceramic has to be as perfect as a painting when it's finished," he added. "That's the beauty of it—this magnanimous overflow."

He's not alone. As collectors seek out pieces that feel more tactile and expressive, "ugly" ceramics are finding audiences, encouraged by gallerists and art advisors. "A collection becomes more interesting if you add more dimensions to it," said Geer Pouls, founder of the craft-forward German gallery [Brutto Gusto](#). "In my advising work, I try to convince my clients to challenge their collection to make it more vivid and to bring some tension to it: in forms, in dimensions, in material, in contents, and so on, so that the works can communicate with each other."



Masaomi Yasunaga
Empty Creature, 2023
Lisson Gallery
[Inquire about availability](#)

Burrows has seen the shift among the collectors who frequent her gallery in New York. More than ever, buyers are looking for something that challenges the status quo. "That's always more interesting than just a beautiful object on the table....People want more substance in their lives. I see people retreating from the superficial."

This interest has been reflected in the secondary market, where unconventional ceramics have fetched seven digits over the last several years. For instance, Voulkos's *Black Bulerias* (1958) achieved the artist's ceramics auction record when it sold for \$1.26 million (including fees) at Phillips in December 2020. In 2023, Lucio Fontana's *Il Guerriero (The Warrior)* (1948) – a grotesque human figure with an eye-catching teal glaze – fetched £1.36 million (\$1.8 million, including fees) at Christie's. On the primary market, meanwhile, some younger ceramists are being snagged by blue-chip galleries, such as Yasunaga, who gained representation from Lisson Gallery in 2023.

Collectors can be drawn to "anything that challenges them, anything that's dark, anything that's heavy," said Ryba. "Some of them have come back and said, 'We just see beauty in its ugliness.'"

■
Maxwell Rabb
Maxwell Rabb is a New York-based writer.

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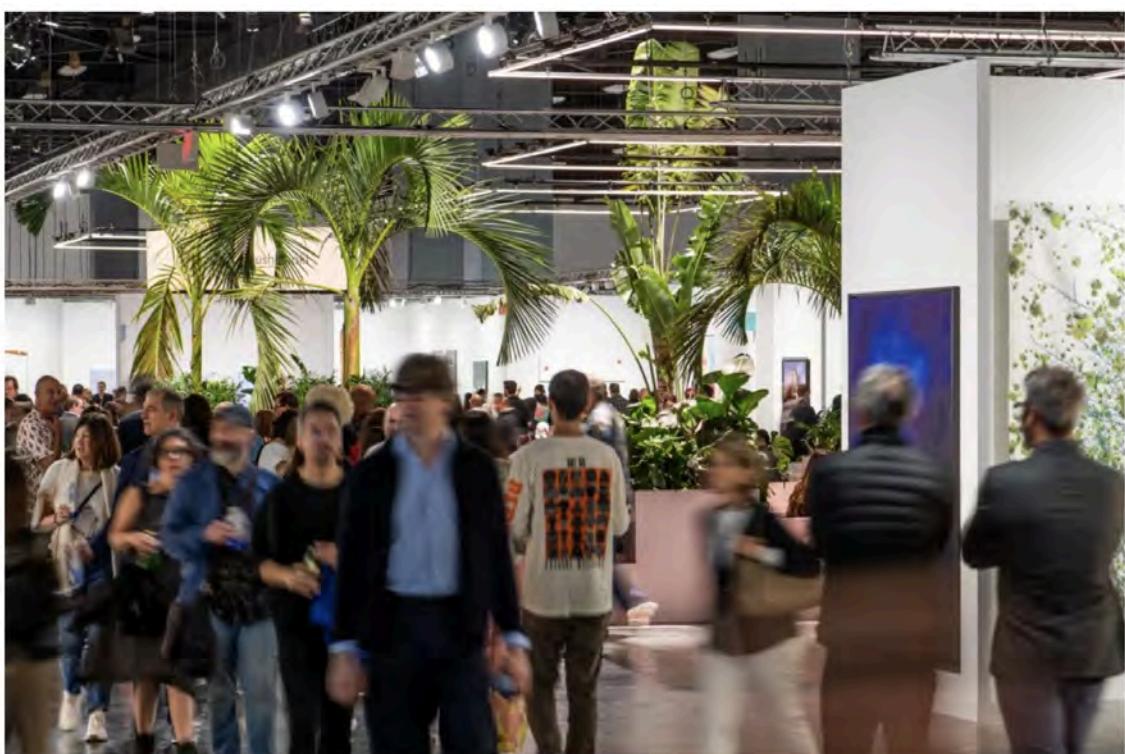
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Art Fairs

Miami Is Offering Free Water Taxis to Avoid Traffic During Art Basel—Here's How to Catch One

Avoid the Venetian Causeway and catch a breeze.



Art Basel Miami Beach. Courtesy Art Basel

by Alina Cohen • November 28, 2025 •  Share This Article

Art Week expects to draw tens of thousands of visitors to Miami in the coming days, and they all need to get around. To accommodate this, the city has announced it will enhance its free water taxi service and provide shuttles to alleviate traffic. Locals and out-of-towners alike should have more time to see—and purchase—the art at and around [Art Basel Miami Beach](#).

Last year, Miami launched the program with four free water taxis. This year, according to *Miami Today*, up to seven will transport aesthetes and revelers across Biscayne Bay. "We're increasing the number of vessels in service starting Wednesday to be able to meet the high demand," Jose Gonzalez, transportation and mobility director for the City of Miami Beach, told the publication. "The water taxi service was extremely popular last year."

Service begins on Monday, December 1. Taxis will ferry passengers between Maurice Gibb Memorial Park on Miami Beach and the Venetian Marina and Yacht Club on the mainland, operating every ten to 15 minutes from 10am to midnight. The rides end on Sunday, December 7 at 10PM.



NADA Miami at the Ice Palace Studios. Photo by Eileen Kinsella.

A [shuttle map](#) is available at the Art Week website. It outlines five routes. The water taxi shuttle drives passengers from the Memorial Park to the convention center, where Art Basel Miami Beach (the main fair) is on view. The Design District art shuttle offers a connection between the convention center and NE 38 St. and NE 1 Ct. This is your destination for

high-end shopping and a slate of new exhibitions at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA): On December 2, the institution opens presentations by Andreas Schulze, Masaomi Yasunaga, Richard Hunt, and Igshaan Adams.

The mid-beach art shuttle veers up the coast and loops around, allowing access to mid beach fairs and hotels. A South Beach shuttle hits the south beach fairs (SCOPE Art Show, Untitled Art, SATELLITE Art Show, and Aqua Art Miami). All road routes originate at the convention center.

The week-long transit system aims to cut gridlock across the causeways and up and down the beach. There's an economic incentive, of course, to helping collectors hit more fairs. *ARTnews* recently reported that Untitled, which sets up camp right on South Beach, was aggressively wooing galleries who showed with NADA, which operates eight miles inland at Ice Palace Film Studios. They were promoting their beach location as a major draw. A ferry will help make NADA, and other inland venues like the Rubell Museum or the Margulies Collection, less of a schlep.

The Transit mobile app will track the shuttles and water taxis in addition to the metrorail, trolleys, and buses. "It's a comprehensive multimodal trip-planning application that also tracks services in real time," Gonzalez said. Master the app, and just maybe you'll be able to see every show and attend every party on your list.

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Vogue Business
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Art Basel Miami 2025 Cheat Sheet

BY MADELEINE SCHULZ
December 1, 2025

Photo: Courtesy of Art Basel

This week will be a busy, buzzy one for Miami Beach. Art collectors, fashion aficionados, sport and food enthusiasts, music buffs and crypto bros will descend on the sunny Florida city to network, party — and see some art. Bringing everyone to town is the annual Miami Art Week, which hosts over 20 art fairs each December. At the center of the week is Art Basel, closing out the year in its largest market: America.

Though US art sales dropped 9% to \$24.8 billion in 2024, the region has remained a market leader for the art fair series, up 1% year-on-year and accounting for 43% of global art sales, according to the [2025 Art Basel & UBS Art Market report](#). The sales dip sits below the global 12% average. The report's authors put the US decline down, in part, to political uncertainty "surrounding the contentious presidential elections".

Still, team members and attendees are optimistic about the upcoming fair, which is rounding out 2025. Art Basel Miami's status as the "culminating art market event of the year" is down to the gathering of galleries who are on the pulse of what's currently selling in the US, says Casey Lesser, chief curator at online art marketplace Artsy, positioning them to put their best foot forward. Art Basel

Paris, which took place in October, also signaled a positive turn, says Art Basel director Bridget Finn. “The outcome in Paris was quite good for many of our galleries,” Finn says, adding that she’s ready to carry that energy through to Miami.



Photo: Courtesy of Art Basel

It's not just Basel on the schedule. Art Basel's sister fair, Design Miami, is also taking place this week — alongside the 20-plus other fairs that make up Miami Art Week. A jam-packed art schedule is supplemented by a vast offering of adjacent events across fashion, sport and food. Miami Art Week is where the overlap between cultural industries really comes to a head — and where younger people with an interest, if not a fluency, in art are able to dabble. Once they sort through the week's goings on, that is.

Here's everything you need to know about this year's Art Basel Miami Beach (ABMB), running from December 3 to 7 (the first two days are VIP-only), as well as the wider Miami Art Week, which kicked off on December 1.

The Miami mood

Miami's sunny and warm weather is a draw for collectors as much of the world — including the majority of the US — heads into the winter months. “It's this incredible postcard of a place, but it's also got such a rich arts community that has only gained strength and momentum over the last 23 years,” Finn says.

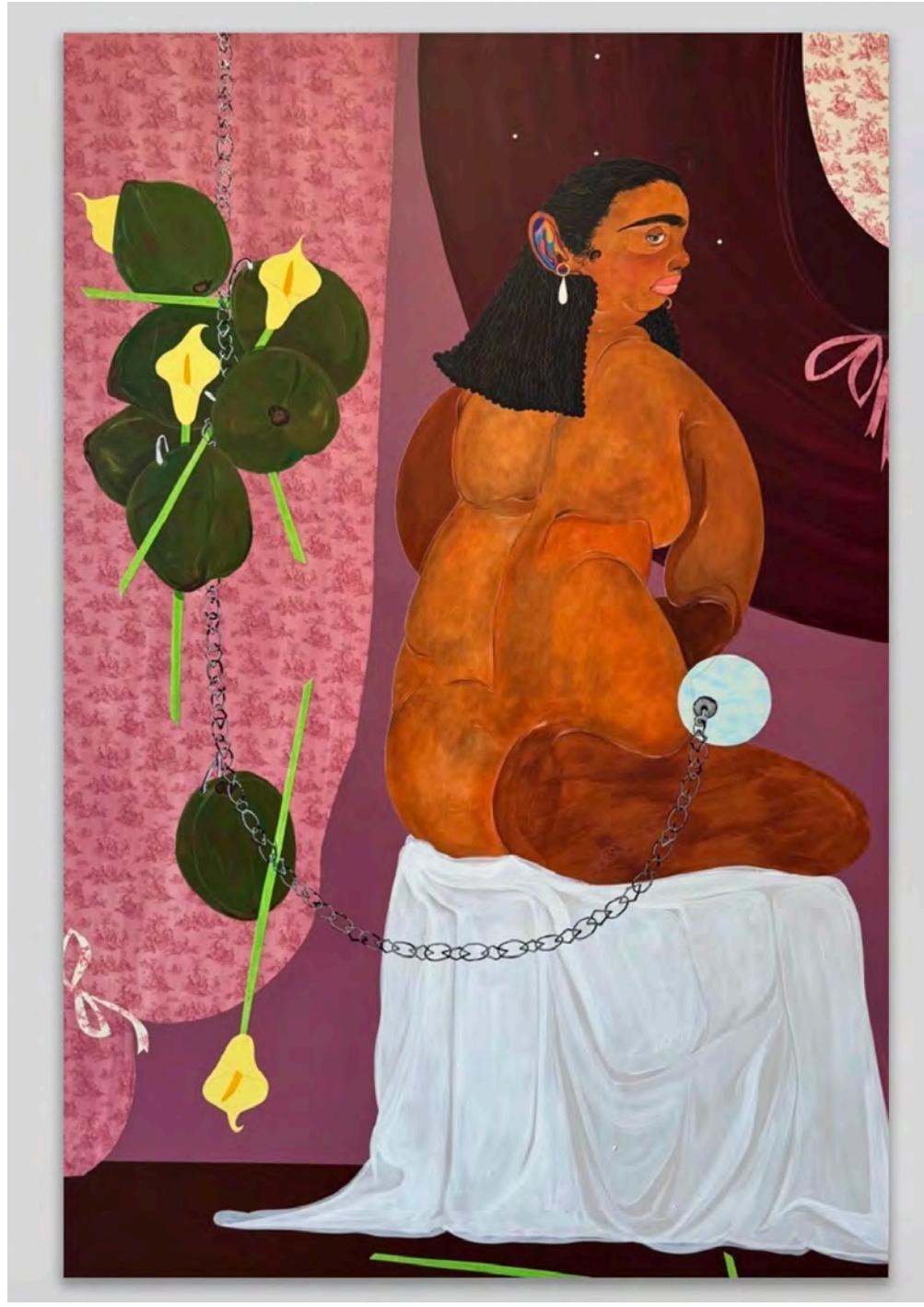
The warmth and ease that comes with the locale aligns well with what many art collectors are gravitating toward, Lesser says. “Artsy’s data shows our buyers are gravitating toward pieces that offer calm, be that through color or subject matter; the great outdoors, we’re seeing that desire to ‘touch grass’; and even lots of food art,” she says. Small works are selling particularly well, Lesser adds — a sign of the (economic) times.



Photo: Courtesy of Art Basel

The US focus of ABMB is key at a time when the market’s under strain. Art Basel Miami Beach has a very distinct energy that you feel as soon as you walk in, and there’s a reason people come back to the fair year after year,” says Matthew Newton head of UBS art advisory for the Americas. “It’s global in scope, but driven by the power of the US art market.” Two-thirds of the exhibiting galleries hail from the Americas, according to Art Basel.

This is key, Finn agrees. “It really is the geographical, but also the cultural and emotional nexus point between North, South and Central America,” she says. “The show itself is very representative of the full community of the Americas, and that’s a defining feature and one that adds this rich layer of depth.”



Bradley Ertaskiran, Bony Ramirez, *The Center of The Universe*, 2025. Photo: Courtesy of the artist and Bradley Ertaskiran, Montreal

Youthful energy

The art market is more dynamic and open-minded than it's been in years, Newton says, which he expects to manifest at ABMB. "We're seeing a noticeable demographic shift of collectors dominating the market, especially among women and Gen Z, whose diverse tastes span a wider range of mediums and formats beyond the traditional," he adds.



Van Doren Waxter, Barbara Hepworth, Sculpture with Colour, 1940. Photo: Courtesy of Van Doren Waxter

This year, Art Basel is moving its youngest galleries to the east entrance, offering them higher visibility, Finn explains. At ABMB, because the space is so large, booths tend to be bigger and more costly, she adds, which can make it difficult for younger voices to participate. To help give those that are participating more space, the fair has expanded its Nova and Positions sectors, which focus on work made within the last three years and solo presentations by younger galleries, respectively. "It's the part of the fair where I always fall in love with new artists," Artsy's Lesser says of Positions. She's especially keen to see Lisbon-based gallery Madragoa's booth with young Italian painter Emilio Gola.



Simões de Assis, Zéh Palito, Study for Negrofight, 2025. Photo: Estúdio em Obra

Art Basel is aiming to harness this youthful openness with the launch of Zero 10, its new platform for digital art that has been in the works for 18 months. It's a return to form, of sorts. In 2022 and 2023, Art Basel was a hub for Web3 and NFT die-hards. This waned in 2024, and now that the (over)hype has died down, Finn is confident the platform will be a connector for those interested in the digital space but unfamiliar with the traditional art world; and for those in the modern gallery sector to familiarize with the digital. "There's only going to be further growth in that arena, so this is a moment where it all kicks off," she says.

Beyond Basel

Though satellite events are now staples during major art fairs, Miami is a different beast. At Miami Art Week, not only are there over 20 international art fairs, but over 1,000 galleries show, museums host special shows and events, and a crop of other activations pop up throughout the city. "Something unique to the Miami show compared to the others is that the entire city transforms," Finn says, adding that events flow through more and more of the city each year.

Lesser always stops by NADA Miami and Untitled Art Miami Beach while in town, which she says are great for catching up with smaller galleries and discovering new artists. Museum shows she's looking forward to include Woody de Othello at Pérez Art Museum Miami (Finn has just seen it, and can attest that it's great), as well as Igshaan Adams at ICA Miami, who Lesser says does incredible tapestries, and Masaomi Yasunaga. The Rubell Museum is always a must-see, she adds: "There's a solo presentation by rising painter Joanna van Son, who was just the artist-in-residence there, as well as a Thomas Houseago survey, which should be interesting."



Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Leilah Babirye, Nkugwa from the Kuchu Mamba (Lungfish) Clan II, 2025.
Photo: Courtesy of the artist and Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Los Angeles

Industries collide

At art fairs globally, fashion has cemented its place, whether in partnering directly with the fairs themselves (as many do with Frieze), or via aptly timed events. This was especially relevant at Art Basel Paris, and shows no signs of slowing in Miami.

Marc Jacobs's Joy artist capsule, which includes collaborations with the likes of Derrick Adams, David Shrigley and Hattie Stewart, will be on display at the fair. Pucci is returning for the second year running. Boss is sponsoring the Art Basel Awards for the first time, taking place on Thursday, December 4. "Where better to have an award ceremony and a more formal, fun party-oriented presentation, if you will, than Miami Beach?" Finn asks. "It's reflective of Miami's sort of loose and broader creative fabric. We are so focused show-on-show and the galleries are our primary clients. But it's a really lovely moment for us to pay homage to the greater infrastructure of the contemporary art world and really take a moment to celebrate all facets."

Elsewhere, Zegna, whose logo was splashed across Art Basel Paris's VIP co-branded totes, is taking things up a notch in Miami, with the second US edition of its Villa Zegna concept. (The brand is an Art Basel partner.) Miu Miu is celebrating the redesign of its Miami Design District store with a December 3 event. Jimmy Choo is presenting an installation for Miami Art Week in partnership with Crosby Studios founder Harry Nuriev at its Miami Design District boutique. JW Anderson is partnering with Miami-founded The Webster, curating a selection of objects and celebrating with a cocktail event.

Outside of fashion, sport — a less common fixture on the art scene — will also have its moment in the sun. Japanese women's wrestling league Sukeban is returning to Miami Art Week for the second year running. The NFL will also be present with its NFL Artist Replay experience, which will feature the artwork of retired tight end Martellus Bennett. Technogym has a booth at Design Miami and a pop-up at The Edition hotel.



Photo: Courtesy of Subekan

There'll be plenty of culinary activations also, including a pop-up (from December 1 to 4) from fashion-favorite culinary collective We Are Ona, in partnership with artist Sabine Marcelis. "Art Basel Miami felt like the perfect platform for us this year — it's a moment where creativity, design and culture collide in an electric, sun-drenched way," says We Are Ona founder Luca Pronzato.

These overlaps are exciting because it brings even more potential collectors into the fold, Artsy's Lesser says. "I think we're at a moment where the art world has a real opportunity to grow — but only if we make it more welcoming," she says. "For more people to become collectors, we have to lower the barriers to entry, whether those are cultural, financial, or simply the intimidation factor that still surrounds the idea of 'the art world'."

Miami Art Week's embrace of cross-industry events and projects offers a compelling model for how this can unfold, Lesser says. "The week is this incredible collision of culture — art, fashion, design, music, sports — and that mix brings in people from all corners of contemporary culture," she says. "When someone encounters art alongside things they already love, they're far more likely to engage, ask questions and see art as something that's accessible to them."

Correction: Matthew Newton's title was updated to head of UBS art advisory for the Americas.

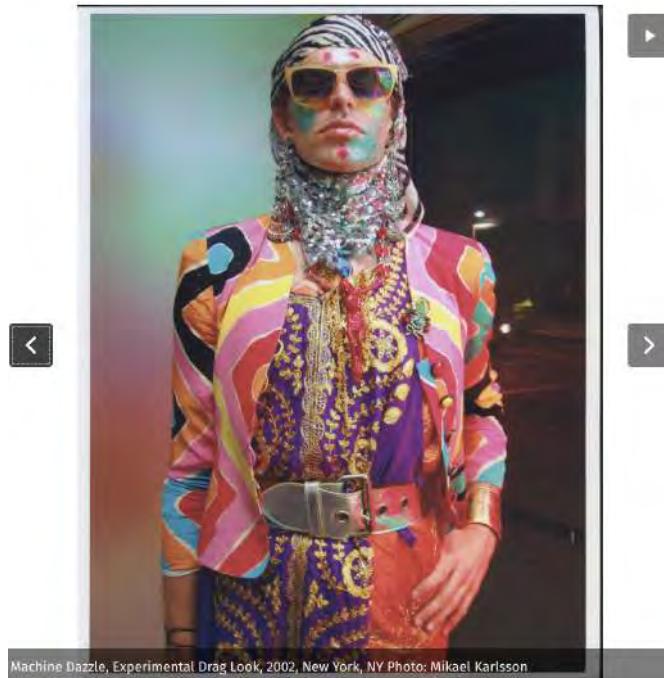
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Reviews and news

Gallery Shows





Machine Dazzle at the Mermaid Parade, 2010, Coney Island, NY Photo: Eileen Keane



Machine Dazzle, 2019 Photo: Gregory Kramer

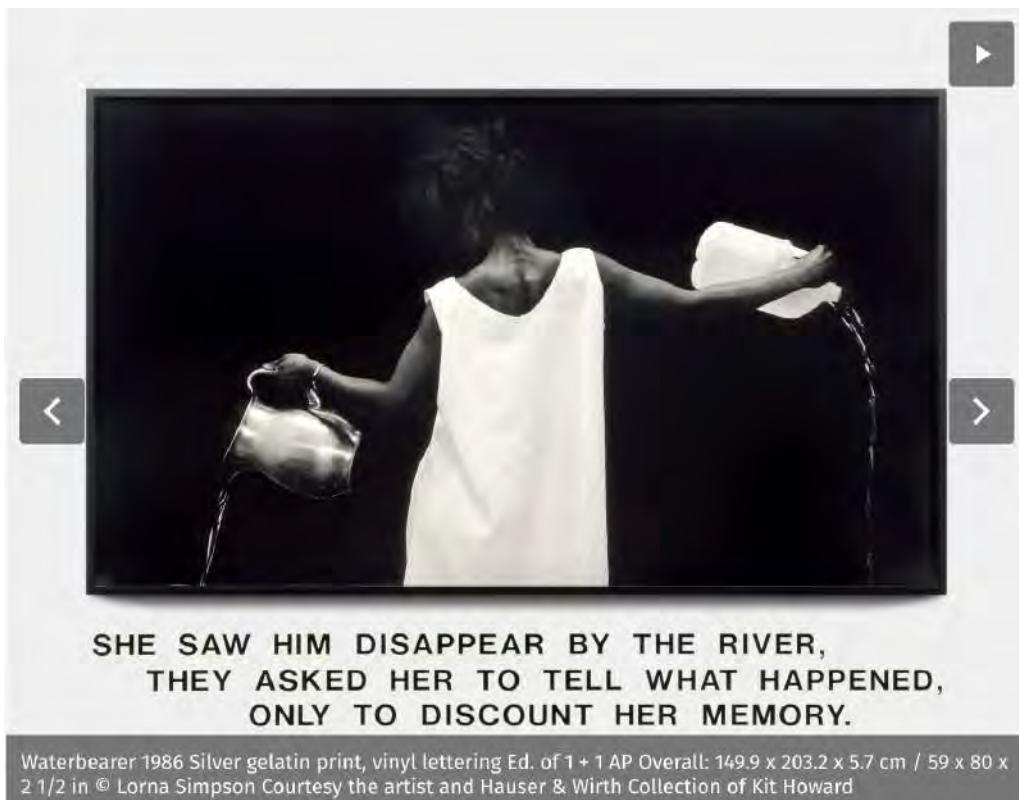


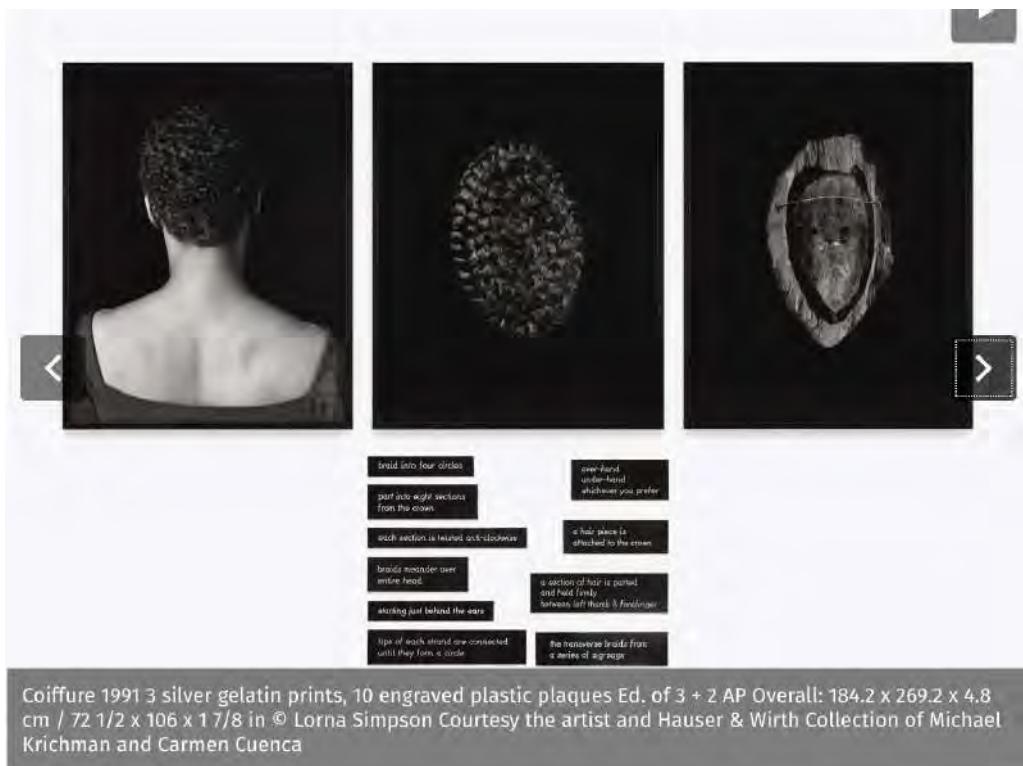
Machine Dazzle at work on A 24 Decade History of Popular Music, The Curran Theater, San Francisco, CA, 2017 Photo: Little Fang

Queer Maximalism x Machine Dazzle – Museum of Arts and Design

Spectacular may be too mild a description of [Queer Maximalism x Machine Dazzle](#) (September 10, 2022 – February 19, 2023), an exhibition that celebrates the multi-faceted designer and performance artist. Known for his design work for drag queens, dancers, and Taylor Mac, whose musical extravaganza, *Taylor Mac's A 24-Decade History of Popular Music* (2016), used his costuming to great effect, Machine Dazzle's creations pull triple duty as stage props, set design, and embracing the kaleidoscope qualities of queer maximalism aesthetic. Along with garments, the exhibit immerses visitors in Machine Dazzle's cultural influences, designs, ephemera, material samples, performances, photography, and video. The result is a bewildering, stunning whirlwind of high/low culture, colors, shapes, and textures celebrating a glorious variety of bodies, identities, and ideas with joy and love.

[Museum of Arts and Design](#), 2 Columbus Circle, Hours: Tue – Sun: 10-6, Admission: General admission: \$18, Seniors (65 years and older): \$14, Students (with valid id): \$12, Children (18 years and younger): Free, Members: Free. Tickets may be purchased in advance [here](#), walk-ins are welcome. PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT FACIAL MASKS ARE STRONGLY RECOMMENDED WHILE VISITING THE MUSEUM, REGARDLESS OF VISITOR VACCINATION STATUS.

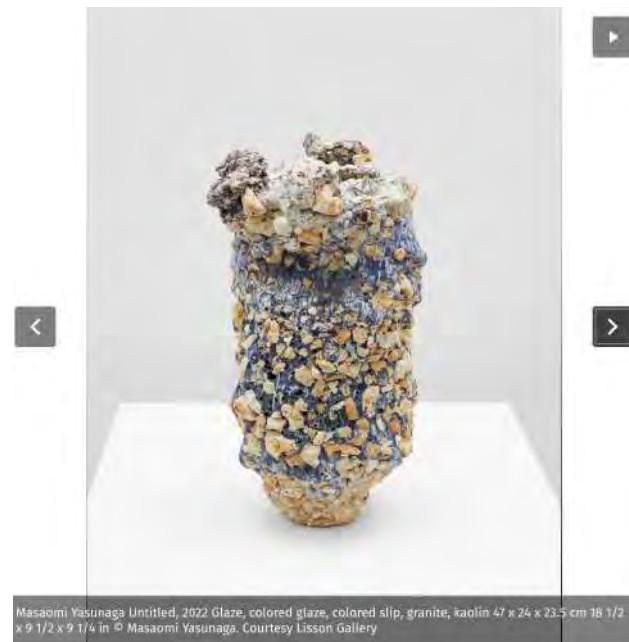




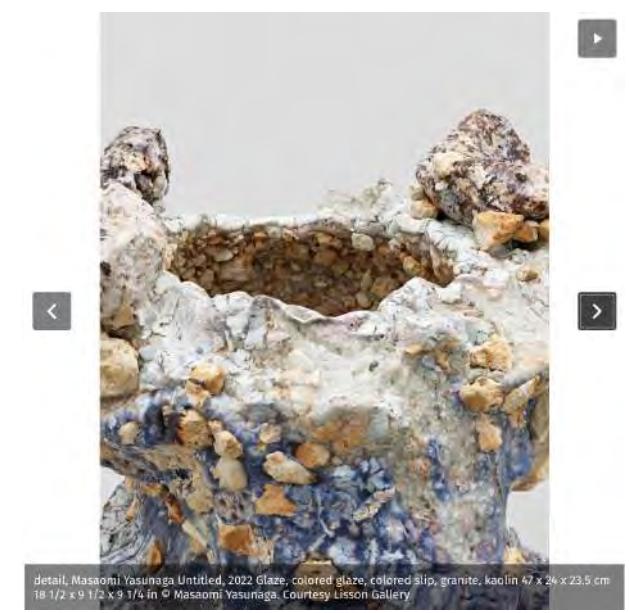
Lorna Simpson 1985-92 – Hauser & Wirth

The conceptual art photography on view in *Lorna Simpson 1985-92* (September 7 – October 22, 2022) is a beautifully concise selection of early work from the artist. Displayed on three floors of Hauser & Wirth's uptown location, large-scale images and accompanying text demonstrate Simpson's extensive knowledge of art, history, sociology, and contemporary life that references and questions the artificial definitions and standards imposed on people, regardless of gender, personal identity, or race. The closely cropped images may seem at first to remove individuality, but on closer observation the postures, clothing, and words chosen for each photograph declare and challenge the myriad issues that Black bodies and lives encounter daily while inspiring visitors to examine their responses to the work and the larger issues it represents.

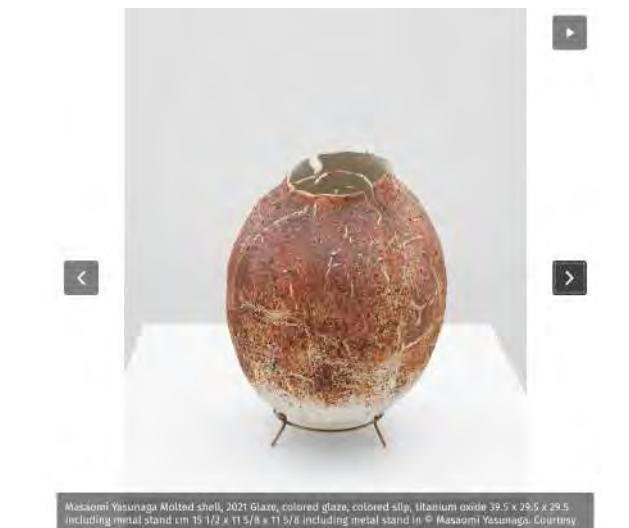
[Hauser & Wirth](#), 32 East 69th Street, Hours: Tue – Sat: 10-6, Admission: Free. PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT FACIAL MASKS ARE STRONGLY RECOMMENDED WHILE VISITING THE GALLERY, REGARDLESS OF VISITOR VACCINATION STATUS.



Masaomi Yasunaga Untitled, 2022 Glaze, colored glaze, colored slip, granite, kaolin 47 x 24 x 23.5 cm 18 1/2 x 9 1/2 x 9 1/4 in © Masaomi Yasunaga. Courtesy Lisson Gallery



detail, Masaomi Yasunaga Untitled, 2022 Glaze, colored glaze, colored slip, granite, kaolin 47 x 24 x 23.5 cm 18 1/2 x 9 1/2 x 9 1/4 in © Masaomi Yasunaga. Courtesy Lisson Gallery



Masaomi Yasunaga Molted shell, 2021 Glaze, colored glaze, colored slip, titanium oxide 39.5 x 29.5 x 29.5 including metal stand cm 15 1/2 x 11 5/8 x 11 5/8 including metal stand in © Masaomi Yasunaga. Courtesy Lisson Gallery



Masaomi Yasunaga Melting vessel, 2022 Glaze, colored glaze, slip, kaolin 57 x 28 x 27.5 cm 22 1/2 x 11 x 10 7/8 in © Masaomi Yasunaga. Courtesy Lisson Gallery



detail, Masaomi Yasunaga Accumulation, 2021 – 2022 Glaze, underglaze color 25 x 25.5 x 25.5 cm 9 7/8 x 10 x 10 in © Masaomi Yasunaga. Courtesy Lisson Gallery

Masaomi Yasunaga: Looking Afar – Lisson Gallery

[Masaomi Yasunaga: Looking Afar](#) (September 8 – October 15, 2022) creates work that links to ceramics without engaging in the strict restrictions of form, material, and method associated with its many categories. Instead of clay, his pieces are initially shaped with glaze, a substance composed of silica (industrial sand), aluminum oxide, calcium oxide, and metallic oxide. The combination of these minerals is usually painted onto pottery, to provide an impermeable colored surface, but Yasunaga uses glaze as the core of the object, then layers sand and other material around it before pit-firing the piece. The heat bonds all these together, producing uniquely textured objects of multi-faceted, complex beauty that destroy the historic boundaries of pottery making.

[Lisson Gallery](#), 508 West 24th Street, Tue – Sat: 10-6, Admission: Free

ADVANCE APPOINTMENTS ARE ENCOURAGED BUT NOT REQUIRED, IF THE GALLERY IS AT CAPACITY, VISITORS WILL BE ASKED TO WAIT OUTSIDE UNTIL STAFF PERMITS ENTRY. TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT, CLICK [HERE](#)

PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT FACIAL MASKS ARE REQUIRED TO BE WORN WHILE VISITING THE GALLERY, REGARDLESS OF VISITOR VACCINATION STATUS.







Dr. Martens, boots, black leather and tan rubber, 2000, England. Gift of The School of Graduate Studies at the Fashion Institute of Technology.



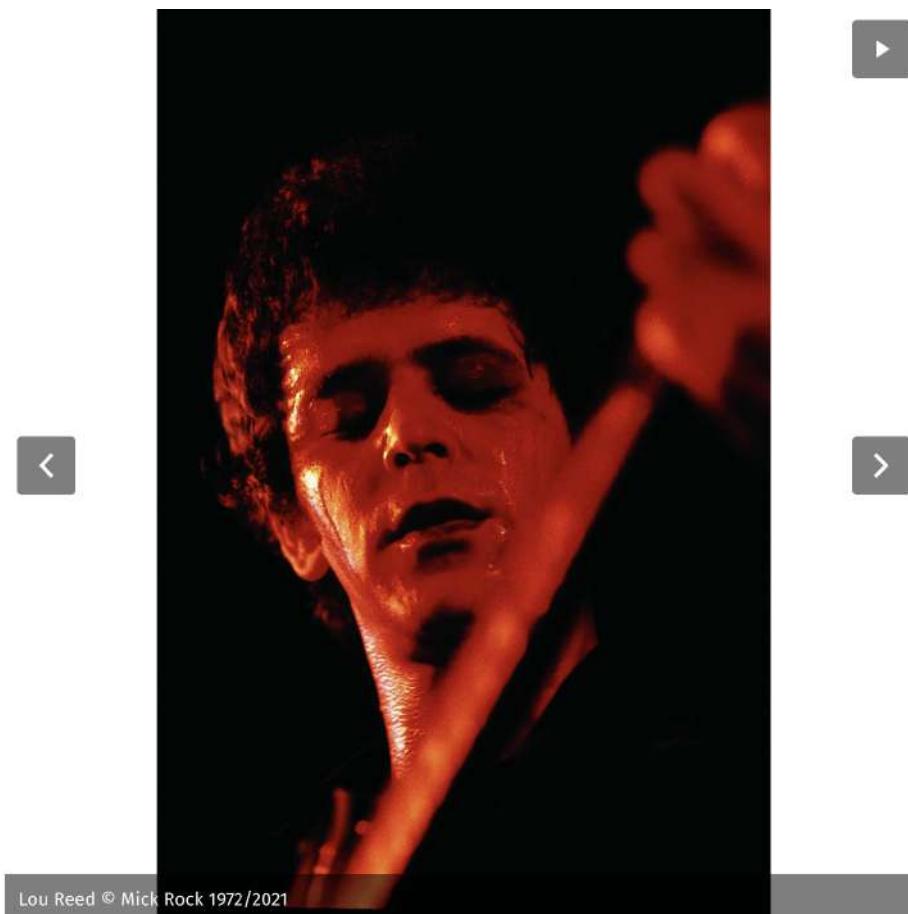
Gucci, stiletto-heeled pumps, red patent leather and silver metal, spring 1998.

Shoes: Anatomy, Identity, Magic – The Museum at FIT

More than any other wardrobe item, shoes have a mystique and meaning that go beyond their basic function. Think of certain fairy tales, portraits of historical figures, modern celebrities – all of them use the visual power of footwear to advance their agendas and set themselves apart from others. Cinderella's glass

slippers aren't just custom-made: they act as the equivalent of an AirTag for the prince to find her after the ball, while the embroidered satin shoes of Louis XIV emphasize his status as king by being completely impractical for walking anywhere but the marble corridors of power, Lady Gaga wearing her Pleaser heels/platforms that literally raise her above any crowd of superstars; all prove that one of the best ways to be noticed and remembered is to pay attention to your footwear. Not convinced? Then head on over to The Museum at FIT to see their latest exhibit [Shoes: Anatomy, Identity, Magic](#) (September 1 – December 31, 2022), a stunning collection that touches on three concepts where design and storytelling merge to create iconic brands and looks that define eras, individuals, and fashion styles. The context of certain shapes and materials has also changed over time, moving some footwear into mainstream fashion, creating less demand for more traditional shoes while encouraging the desirability, fantasy, or magical imaginings by the consumer. The result is a thought-provoking examination of shoes as object, psychological motivation, and social signifier.

[The Museum at FIT](#), 227 West 27th Street, Hours: Wed – Fri: 12-8, Sat – Sun: 10-5, Admission: Free. PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT FACE MASKS MUST BE WORN IN THE BUILDING AND EXHIBITION SPACES. Proof of vaccination is no longer required for entry.



Lou Reed © Mick Rock 1972/2021



Lou Reed and band performing at The Bottom Line in New York City as part of the Legendary Hearts US Tour, 1983. Robert Quine, guitar; Fernando Saunders, bass; and Fred Maher, drums. © Jane L. Wechsler. Lou Reed Papers, Music & Recorded Sound Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.



Lou Reed holding a copy of Metal Machine Music at an in-store signing in Paris, September 19, 1996. © Mila Reynaud. Lou Reed Papers, Music & Recorded Sound Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.



Lou Reed's box of Doo-Wop, Rhythm & Blues, and Rock & Roll 45s. Photo by NYPL/jonathan blanc. Lou Reed Papers, Music & Recorded Sound Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Lou Reed: Caught Between the Twisted Stars – NYPL for the Performing Arts

The latest offering from the New York Public Library exhibition program is [Lou Reed: Caught Between the Twisted Stars](#) (June 9, 2022 – March 4, 2023), based on the extensive collection of the Lou Reed Archive donated in 2017.

This deep dive into the life and career of Reed, a founder of The Velvet Underground as well as the author of the classic rock songs 'Walk on the Wild Side' and 'Perfect Day', is curated by Don Fleming (archivist for the Lou Reed Archive) and Jason Stern (Technical Director and Archivist for Lou Reed during his lifetime). Their selections of audio and video material, memorabilia, photographs, and writings are fascinating, illustrating his collaborations, friendships, and creative process for both his music and writing.

The imaginative exhibition design from the Performing Arts Museum staff uses the gallery space with flair, and although crammed with material, it never feels too crowded. The Lou Reed Listening Room and content design was done by Raj Patel at Arup, providing visitors with a comprehensive audio selection of Reed's work and influences. The exhibition site also provides information on a 'Listen Like Lou' [playlist](#) on Spotify, a reading list, and a [link](#) to the Lou Reed Archive.

[NYPL for the Performing Arts](#), 40 Lincoln Center Plaza (face the opera house, then walk to the right, library is located at end of plaza area) or 111 Amsterdam Avenue between 64th and 65th Streets, Hours: Mon – Sat: 10:30-6, Admission: Free, PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT FACIAL MASKS ARE STRONGLY RECOMMENDED WHILE VISITING THE GALLERY, REGARDLESS OF VISITOR VACCINATION STATUS.

LISSON GALLERY

Artfix Daily
25th January 2023

ARTFIX*daily*
Curated Art World News & Exclusives

Auburn hosting globally recognized artist Masaomi Yasunaga for first solo museum exhibition

AUBURN, Alabama / January 25, 2023



Installation view of "Masaomi Yasunaga: In Holding Close." Photo by Mason Williams.

Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art at Auburn University

(ARTFIX*daily*.com) The Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art at Auburn University became the first American museum to present a solo exhibition by Masaomi Yasunaga, a Japanese artist regarded for his experimental forms, when it opened for the spring semester on Tuesday, Jan. 24.

"In Holding Close" is on view until Sunday, May 7, in the museum's Grand Gallery and Fuller E. Calloway Box. Southern-made objects, including more functional ceramics, are contrasted with his work and exhibited concurrently in the Noel and Kathryn Wadsworth Dickinson Gallery and Chi-Omega-Hargis Gallery. Museum administrators scheduled these two engagements around the Alabama Clay Conference, which will meet in Auburn for the first time in its 38-year history. Museum admission is free.



Installation view of "Masaomi Yasunaga: In Holding Close" Photo by Mason Williams.

Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art at Auburn University

Yasunaga is a third-generation student of the avant-garde movement Sodeisha. The artist's conceptual approach and technique differ from Eastern ceramic traditions. Translating to "Crawling through Mud Association," the style counters simple forms used in daily Japanese life.

Rather than building structures from clay, Yasunaga works with glazes, soils and other raw materials, encasing them in sand or clay layers for firing. Once the form cools, he excavates the vessel's remains, challenging what is known about sculptural pottery and the concepts of time.



Installation view of "Clay Body." Photo by Mason Williams.

Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art at Auburn University

Conversely, the companion exhibition of collection objects and loans examines more traditional forms and techniques. As distinctive as Alabama red clay, pottery and stoneware play a significant role in Southern culture. The 40-plus works in "Clay Body—Pottery and Stoneware of the Southeast" are gathered from the university art collection and private lenders, some of whom are alumni. Despite their simplicity, advanced skill is evident.

The makers' creativity elevates functional objects and sheds light on the state and her people for more than 200 years.

"As an academic museum, The Jule serves university audiences and the people of Alabama through instruction and outreach," said Cindi Malinick, executive director. "When the organizers of the conference named Auburn as the host site for the statewide event, we recognized the opportunity to teach with art objects to reveal a variety of styles and treatments reflecting a wider breadth of what is possible through this medium."

Malinick added that the exhibition appeals to students in other disciplines beyond art and design, such as geology, chemistry and history.

Located on Auburn's campus, the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art is the cultural heart of an Alabama public research institution serving students, faculty and Southeastern constituents. The university art collection features works spanning the 17th to 21st centuries and includes photographs, works on paper depicting the South, ceramics and Southern visionary art. Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, the museum celebrates its 20th Anniversary in August 2023. For more, [visit the museum's website](#).

Auburn University is a nationally ranked land grant institution recognized for its commitment to world-class scholarship, interdisciplinary research with an elite, top-tier Carnegie R1 classification, life-changing outreach with Carnegie's Community Engagement designation and an undergraduate education experience second to none. Auburn is home to more than 30,000 students, and its faculty and research partners collaborate to develop and deliver meaningful scholarship, science and technology-based advancements that meet pressing regional, national and global needs. Auburn's commitment to active student engagement, professional success and public/private partnership drives a growing reputation for outreach and extension that delivers broad economic, health and societal impact.

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LISSON GALLERY

Sculpture Magazine
21st October 2022

sculpture

A PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCULPTURE CENTER



Installation view of "Looking Afar / 遠くを見る," Lisson Gallery, West 24th Street, New York, 2022. Photo: © Masaomi Yasunaga, Courtesy Lisson Gallery

Stillness in the Midst of Chaos: A Conversation with Masaomi Yasunaga

October 21, 2022 by Robert Preece

Masaomi Yasunaga pursues “fundamental beauty.” A student of Satoru Hoshino, Yasunaga continues the experimental ethos of Sodeisha, or “crawling through the mud association,” a postwar Japanese art movement (1948–98) that explored the sculptural possibilities of ceramics. But instead of clay, Yasunaga adopts glaze as his primary material, often combining it with raw elements—feldspar, whole rocks, metal

or glass powders—before burying his intentionally pliable forms in layers of sand and kaolin, then firing them. Once cooled, the sculptures are excavated from their beds like archaeological artifacts. Both process and resulting works privilege natural forces over artistic artifice, “melting the material and letting gravity take hold of its shape once again, eradicating the ego along the way.”



Untitled, 2021. Glaze, glass, stone, kaolin, and kiln wash, 83 x 76 x 58 cm. Photo: © Masaomi Yasunaga, Courtesy Lisson Gallery

Robert Preece: *Untitled* (2021) has an engaging mystery and depth. What were you thinking about when you were making it, and how did you achieve this effect?

Masaomi Yasunaga: First, let me elaborate a little on the basis of my practice. What is fire? Fire is a phenomenon that is an absolute necessity to my method of production, and it lies at the heart of my practice. While fire is an inseparable factor in human evolution, it also possesses the ability to destroy. I experienced its terrifying might four years ago when a fire broke out in my studio and engulfed it in flames.

How do I deal with these flames in my practice? How do I perceive fire? I think of the flames as a filter, and the kiln that controls the flame as a sort of time machine. I once made a white porcelain jar by

mixing my grandmother's ashes with glaze. My main objective was to mourn her in my own way and to share my feelings with my relatives. When I look back on that experience and contemplate what it meant to me, I believe that the process of filtering my grandmother's remains through fire created a change in state from material to memory. The most important part of this act was the thought that I would never forget my grandmother's death, and I used the fire to enhance the purity of that thought.

RP: Could you explain the gravel plinth for this work as it was installed at Lisson Gallery in East Hampton, in 2021? What is the visual reference?

MY: My family have been devout Catholics for generations, and I was baptized as an infant. In order to escape religious persecution, my mother's ancestors migrated to a small island along the Goto Islands in Nagasaki Prefecture in far southwestern Japan. The island was occupied by just a few dozen inhabitants. My mother, who was born there, was also very devout; and growing up, I witnessed her strict asceticism. My works inevitably incorporate this kind of faith and asceticism, but not intentionally. The ideal form of artwork for me is not that of self-expression, but rather, something that exists beyond the filtering of the flames.



Installation view, Lisson Gallery, East Hampton, New York, 2021. Photo: © Masaomi Yasunaga, Courtesy Lisson Gallery

RP: What are you thinking about when you create multi-part works such as *Fused Pots* (2021) and *Fused vessels* (2021)?

MY: In Japan, each part of a vessel is referred to by the name of a different body part. For example, different parts of a flower vase are referred to as the waist, body, neck, mouth, and ears. I believe this is done to implement a form of personification, and I feel that I also personify works within my practice.

The works constructed with multiple vessels that melt into each other during firing, such as the "Melting Vessels" series, are inspired by the image of a group. These works can refer to my wife, my sons, or myself; they symbolize individual personalities coming together to form a single collective.

RP: What are some of the ideas behind other forms, such as *Untitled* (2021) and *Accumulation* (2022)?

MY: The process of shaping my works entails the selection of a few thematic keywords first, and then I engage in a process of intuitively modeling the work based on the theme. *Accumulation* represents the accumulation of various experiences and the presence of everything. My Christian legacy, my encounter with ceramics, the death of my grandmother, marriage to my wife, the birth of my children, and the act of creating innovative works have all accumulated into what I feel is the essence of this work. From another perspective, for me, it also represents the history of humanity.

Untitled represents artificial objects being returned to nature. Within the process of creating this work, I took granite—a natural object—and shaped it to my will. Then I returned it to its natural state once again through firing and melting the work, embodying a chaotic state that lies between the natural and the artificial.



Skeleton of vessel, 2021–22. Glaze and underglaze color, 25 x 25.5 x 25.5 cm. Photo: © Masaomi Yasunaga,
Courtesy Lisson Gallery

RP: The distance between the two vessel forms increases in *Skeleton of vessel* (2021–22), emphasizing the surface of the connection in the middle. Why?

MY: I often use bones as the subject for my works because they allow me to imagine a form of sensual distance. I added imaginary bones to this work, stripped the flesh off, and just left the bones. I find it interesting that what remains is a purely imaginary skeletal structure that lacks functional intention. *Skeleton of a box* (2020–22), with a box as the motif, is part of the same series.

RP: You studied for a Master's in Environmental Design in Osaka. To what extent do you think that training has impacted your sculptural practice?

MY: My research topic in graduate school was based on the production of ceramic works. There aren't many differences from my current discipline. The biggest factor that continues to influence my practice is having developed an interest in glazes during my academic studies.



Untitled, 2005. Glaze and porcelain, 27 x 10 x 10 cm. Photo: Courtesy Masaomi Yasunaga

RP: You've identified *Untitled* (2005), a glazed work, as a key point in your development as an artist. In what ways? What did you learn?

MY: I started practicing ceramics as a student, and I have always been interested in glaze used for decoration over clay, which is the main material used in ceramics. I produced this work when I was still a student, and it is one of the first works in which I used glaze as the main medium. At that time, I placed powdered glaze in a box made of clay and fired it. After firing, the box was broken and the glaze lumps inside were made into the artwork. Creating this work revealed the difficulties—as well as the possibilities—of using this innovative technique of creating works mainly out of glazes.

RP: The next important works you cite are from 2019—*Melting vessel*, which consists of glaze, clay, and copper wire, and *Crumbling*, made of glass and plaster. What changed over the intervening years, and how do these works signal a breakthrough?

MY: After graduating from university, I worked with clay and porcelain to make vessels in conjunction with my glaze works. This was partly to make a living, but I also wanted to gain more experience in kiln firing, which is the most important part of my practice. After creating vessels for over 10 years, I built a wood-fired kiln at my studio in 2011, and I proceeded to produce and fire white porcelain works for seven years. That kiln was fired more than 100 times over that time period, and the firing method for my current glaze works is based on my experiences during that earlier stage.

In 2018, my works began to receive attention from the Nonaka-Hill gallery in Los Angeles, and I had my first exhibition there in 2019. The two works I presented were *Melting vessel* and *Crumbling*. Prior to this exhibition, I had only exhibited works in the domestic craft scene in Japan. So, these two works hold a great significance in changing my life after their presentation in the United States.



Crumbling, 2019. Glass and plaster, 12 x 10.5 x 9.5 cm. Photo: Courtesy Nonaka-Hill

RP: With *Melting vessel* (2020), made of glaze and clay, *Untitled* (2021), made of glaze, granite, colored slip, and kaolin, and *Fused vessel* (2021), made of glaze, colored glaze, colored slip, and kaolin, I feel a serenity, timelessness, a meditative quality, calm within chaos. Is this intended?

MY: The goal of my discipline is to pursue what I believe to be fundamental beauty. It goes without saying that my works are shaped by my will, but I believe that firing the works filters out any impurities such as will, ego, and miscellaneous thoughts, revealing the fundamental beauty that I seek from within the work. The fundamental beauty that I seek is, as you say, something that involves eternity in the sense of sensory perspective, a meditative quality, and the stillness in the midst of chaos.

RP: Are there any artists whose work you particularly like?

MY: I like the Japanese ceramicist Satoru Hoshino, who inspired me to take up ceramics, and Sterling Ruby, who held a two-person exhibition with me at the Nonaka-Hill gallery two years ago. My interest in contemporary art has bloomed only in the past three to four years. I believe that I am influenced more by ancient civilizations and their artifacts, as well as by historical Asian ceramics, in which I've been interested for some time.



Installation view of "Looking Afar / 遠くを見る," Lisson Gallery, West 24th Street, New York, 2022. Photo: © Masaomi Yasunaga, Courtesy Lisson Gallery

RP: What is your working process like? Is it planned out, or more trial and error? Are there many experiments and failures?

MY: Most of the time, I bring small works directly into production straight from the images in my head. For larger works, however, I go back and forth between rough sketches and production. There are roughly three steps in the production process: molding, firing, and polishing—and I am especially focused during the molding process. I am aware that I create a relatively large amount of work, and I aim to eventually complete every work that I have started. I keep all the unfinished and unsatisfactory works because even if something does not turn out well after being fired, I plan to bring it to completion through repeated re-working and re-firing.

RP: Your studio is in Iga-shi, Mie prefecture, southeast of Kyoto. What is your working atmosphere like?

MY: I normally work in silence. I sometimes play music depending on my mood, but I prefer relatively quiet music. From the window, the view overlooks the countryside with rice fields. I have two assistants, so I make sure to have lunch and coffee breaks with them.



Empty vessel, 2021. Glaze, slip, and kaolin, 79 x 58 x 20 cm. Photo: © Masaomi Yasunaga, Courtesy Lisson Gallery

RP: To what extent would you consider your works to be “Japanese,” “international,” personal?

MY: The imagery of my works transforms organically from one work to another, but there is an underlying unifying factor in that all of my works are derived from personal experience and the thoughts that follow afterwards, which are heavily reflected in each work. Starting from this initial factor, I sometimes expand the images into something that transcends space and time, and social or temporal borders.

Masaomi Yasunaga's exhibition “Looking Afar/遠くを見る” is on view at the Lisson Gallery's Chelsea location through October 29, 2022.

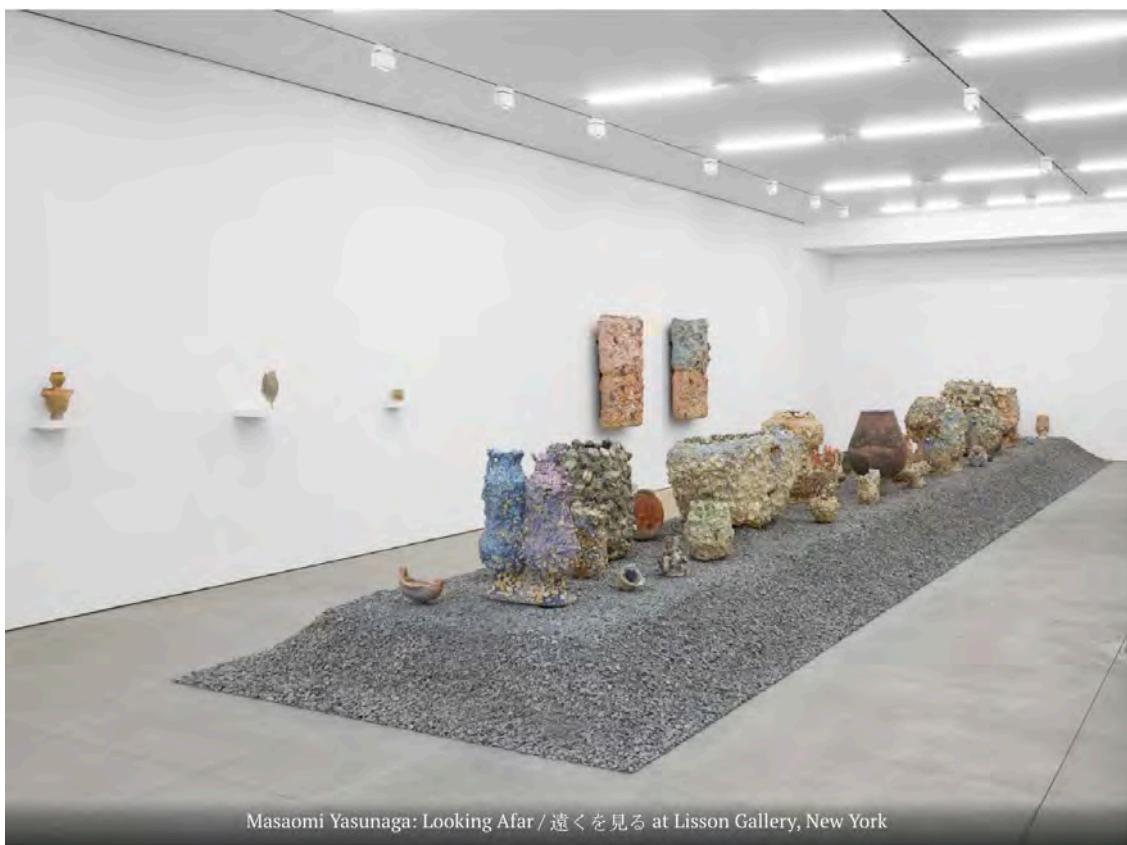
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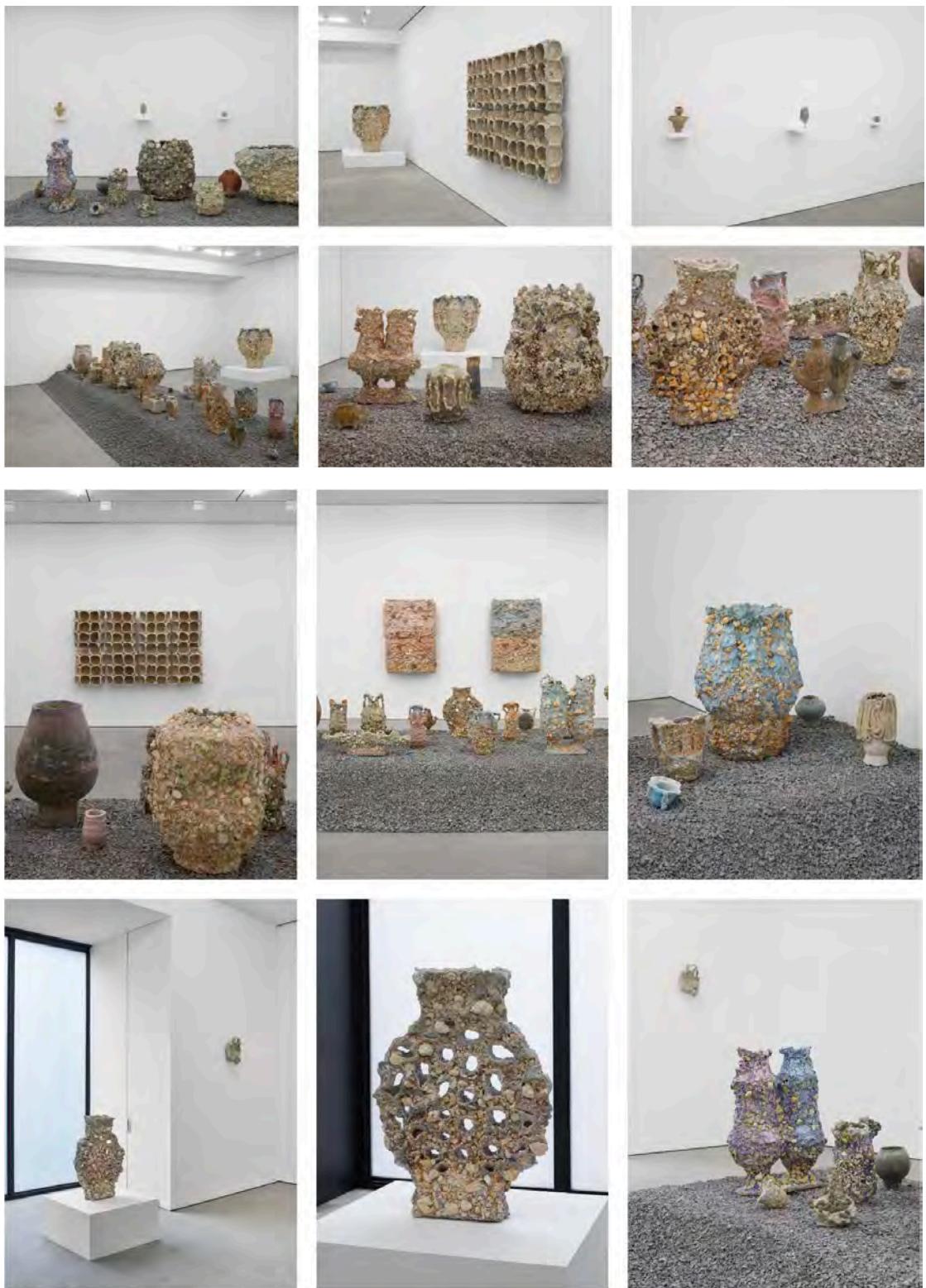
Ceramics Now
8 September 2022

CERAMICS NOW

Masaomi Yasunaga: Looking Afar / 遠くを見る at Lisson Gallery, New York

September 8, 2022 in Exhibitions





Masaomi Yasunaga: Looking Afar / 遠くを見る is on view at **Lisson Gallery, New York**

September 8 – October 15, 2022

For his first exhibition in New York, the sculptor Masaomi Yasunaga presents a large body of new, experimental ceramic works. The gallery space features over 50 avant-garde vessel forms, including his largest to date, displayed on beds of gravel and flanked by structures fastened to the walls. Yasunaga's unique practice and outright omission of clay offer a re-evaluation of ceramic tradition and reposition the works beyond ceramics to constructions that encompass sculpture, installation and even performance. Looking Afar explores the artist's unprecedented process and the sentimentality that guides it.

The act of firing lies at the core of Yasunaga's practice. While pottery is typically formed from clay, fired in a kiln and sealed with a finishing coat of glaze, Yasunaga adopts glaze as the primary material from which to build his sculptural works, incorporating a pliable foundation that deforms when fired. The initial shapes are combined with raw materials—feldspars, whole rocks, metal or glass powders—before they are buried in various strata of sand and kaolin to preserve aspects of their structure in the firing stage. The physical process is an indication of the natural over the artificial. "I consider the process of firing as an act to retain a certain level of sensory distance between the creator and the material," says Yasunaga. "After projecting the ego upon the material and creating a sculpture that stands against gravity, the firing process reverts that action by melting the material and letting gravity take hold of its shape once again, eradicating the ego along the way."

Once cooled, Yasunaga's sculptures are excavated from their beds in a studio process analogous to archaeological excavation and discovery. The display in the exhibition mirrors the unearthing process. The yielded objects appear honed and shaped by earthly elements over centuries, some whole and others curiously fragmented. The sculptures are simultaneously primitive and contemporary; objects of human culture which appear as if lost and found, seeming to confirm the supremacy of nature's order over the world of humankind.

The pastoral landscape that surrounds Yasunaga's studio in Japan's Mie Prefecture influences his perspective. The distant views and the act of seeing afar conjure both physical and psychological experiences. He is interested in how one approaches something far remote, such as time, space, and thought. The kiln is a time machine and fire filters what remains. Thirteen years ago, following the death of his grandmother, Yasunaga incorporated her ashes into the glaze for an arrangement of white porcelain urns. Through the fire the artist's memories of his grandmother were crystallized. The hollow walls within the artist's unorthodox vessels echo senses of melancholy and nostalgia. Featuring an assortment of proportions, the works dig into the scale of past ruins, from insect bones to derelict buildings. They offer a reevaluation of the potential of the ceramic tradition, examining remembrance, highlighting the ambiguous nature of observing a distant setting, and identifying what's left once filtered through the fire.

Works by Masaomi Yasunaga are included in an exhibition focusing on ceramic art at the Museum of Contemporary Ceramic Art in Gifu, Japan, opening September. Yasunaga will also be the subject of a solo exhibition at the Palomar Foundation in Como, Italy, opening October 2022.

About the artist

Masaomi Yasunaga was a student of Satoru Hoshino, a coterie of the avant-garde ceramic group Sodeisha: a post-war (1940s – 1990s) movement that questioned the mandate of functionality within the ceramic medium and pioneered a new sculptural philosophy. Translated as 'crawling through the mud society', artists of Sodeisha rebelled against the prevalent ceramic traditions in Japan to create existentially and emotionally driven artworks. Yasunaga extends the legacy of Sodeisha group's experimental ethos by focusing on the process of creation, centred around the sculptural form rather than the functional use of the object. Inspired by his upbringing within Japan's Catholic minority and ensuing appreciation for aesthetics of Western origin, Yasunaga honours a global range of vessel forms and ritual objects. With titles referencing physical states of being — empty, melting, fused, molted, shedding, skeleton, flesh and bone — the artist evokes nature's physicality into earthenware, eliciting an emotional connection with the viewer.

Yasunaga (born 1982) lives and works in Iga-shi, Mie Prefecture, Japan. He has a Masters Degree in Environmental Design from Osaka Sangyo University. Recent solo exhibitions include Masaomi Yasunaga at Lisson Gallery, East Hampton, NY, USA (2021); Empty Parade at wad Café, Osaka, Japan (2020); To things that exist, to things that don't exist at gallery YDS, Kyoto, Japan (2020); Empty Landscape at Libby Leshgold Gallery, Vancouver, Canada (2020); Masaomi Yasunaga at Nonaka-Hill, Los Angeles, CA, USA (2019); Masaomi Yasunaga: A Shadow of the Eternity at Utsuwakan, Kyoto, Japan (2019); Memory of Orient at Gallery Utsuwa Note, Kawagoe, Saitama, Japan (2018); Masaomi Yasunaga Exhibition at Garb Domingo, Okinawa, Japan (2017);

and arid landscapes at pramata, Tokyo, Japan (2017). Selected group exhibitions include Sterling Ruby and Masaomi Yasunaga at Nonaka- Hill, Los Angeles, CA, USA. His work is included in the permanent collections of the Ariana Museum, Geneva, Switzerland and The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX, USA.

About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and promotes the work of more than 60 international artists across two spaces in London, three in New York, and one in Shanghai, as well as forthcoming galleries in Beijing and Los Angeles. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Art & Language, Carl Andre, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, John Latham, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among many others. It still works with many of these artists as well as others of that generation from Carmen Herrera to the renowned estate of Leon Polk Smith.

In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British sculptors to the public for the first time, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie. Since 2000, the gallery has gone on to represent many more leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Susan Hiller, Tatsuo Miyajima and Sean Scully. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists led by Cory Arcangel, Ryan Gander, Van Hanos, Hugh Hayden, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost, Pedro Reyes, Wael Shawky and Cheyney Thompson.

Lisson Gallery

508 West 24th Street
New York 10011
United States

Photo captions

Masaomi Yasunaga: Looking Afar / 遠くを見る, Exhibition view. 508 West 24th Street, New York. 8 September – 15 October, 2022. © Masaomi Yasunaga. Courtesy Lisson Gallery

Footnotes

1. See a short in-the-studio movie about Masaomi Yasunaga's innovative process ([link](#)). 

Ocula
31 August 2022

OCULA

Ocula Magazine | Features | Exhibition

New York Exhibitions to See: Fall 2022

By [Elaine YJ Zheng](#) | New York, 31 August 2022

Running since 1994, The Armory Show has built a legacy within New York's cultural landscape. Anticipating its return this fall (9–11 September 2022), *Ocula Magazine* shares a selection of exhibitions to see across New York's museums, galleries, and non-profit spaces.



Masaomi Yasunaga, *Melting vessel* (2022). Glaze, slip, clay, underglaze colour, kaolin. 43.5 x 31 x 32.5 cm. © Masaomi Yasunaga. Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

Masaomi Yasunaga: Looking Afar
Lisson Gallery, 504 W 24th Street
8 September–15 October 2022

Masaomi Yasunaga has devised new forms that centre on expressiveness, and represent abstract states such as emptiness, fusion, and melting. Yasunaga was a student of Satoru Hoshino, a proponent of the Sodeisha group, which questioned the mandate of functionality within traditional Japanese ceramics in the second half of the 20th century.

The present exhibition includes a new body of experimental ceramics, made primarily of glaze combined with naturally occurring materials like feldspars, rocks, and glass powders. Reconstructed forms such as *Melting vessel* (2022) appear as bright assemblages of earthen debris that are buried into sand or kaolin before firing.



8 SEP-15 OCT 2022

Masaomi Yasunaga

*Masaomi Yasunaga: Looking Afar / 透くを
見る*

Lisson Gallery, New York

[VIEW CURRENT EXHIBITION](#)

The Art Newspaper
1 April 2022



THE ART NEWSPAPER

Thomas Dane exhibition in Naples explores the power and precarity of ceramics

Lynda Benglis and Magdalene Odundo join historical figures like Lucio Fontana in a group show that pushes at the limits of what clay can do



Artwork: Serena Korda.
Courtesy the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery. Photo: Maurizio Esposito

Ceramics are all the art world rage at the moment, but a new exhibition at Thomas Dane's Naples gallery is one apart. Postponed twice due to Covid, *A Matter of Life and Death*, bring together an international line up of 13 artists who have made works in clay.

Organised by curator Jenni Lomax, it feels more like an institutional show than a commercial one—although it features a formidable quartet of artists on the gallery's roster: Magdalene Odundo, Lynda Benglis, Anya Gallaccio and the late Philip King. For 27 years, Lomax was the pioneering director of Camden Art Centre where, long before today's upsurge in interest, she established a reputation for championing work in ceramics as well as the best in contemporary and 20th-century art. During her time at Camden she instigated a programme of ceramics fellowships and her departure was marked by the gallery's establishment of The Frelands Lomax Ceramics Fellowship, which continues to offer residencies and exhibition opportunities to emerging artists working with clay.

This abiding commitment to the history and potential of ceramics is evident in Lomax's choice of work for Thomas Dane, which spans generations and pushes at the limits of what clay can be made to say and do. A trio of sleek new burnished pots by Magdalene Odundo is offset by a pieced painted terracotta plaque by Lucio Fontana; Philip King sliced vessel sculptures cavort alongside two totemic perforated standing structures etched with English and Yoruba text from Lawson Oyekan; and in Keith Harrison's film, clay is wrapped directly around the elements of his grandmother's electric fire to potentially lethal effect.

Serena Korda's grimacing, anthropomorphic pots are designed to be blown into while Anya Gallaccio's amorphous forms have been recycled from an earlier work in which raw clay was robotically shaped using a 3D printer. Part bones, part intestines, these suggestive shapes are now given a new glazed, patinated lease of life by being ceremonially cremated in both industrial and outdoor, wood-fuelled kilns.



Artwork: Masaomi Yasunaga.
Courtesy the artist, Thomas Dane Gallery and Nonoka Hill. Photo: Maurizio Esposito

More clay rituals are conjured up in the mysterious encrusted structures of Masaomi Yasunaga, which are fired by being buried in sand mixed with fragments of pebbles, glass and ash. (Once Yasunaga even added the ashes of his grandmother.) These bizarre forms, some resembling corals, others barnacled artefacts taken from the ocean floor, are here shown lined up along a funerary mound of the mineral detritus out of which they originally emerged. Phoebe Cummings' took up residence in the gallery in order to create her intricate and impossibly delicate arrangements of flowers and fruit that resemble Flemish vanitas paintings, and which, being fashioned from unfired clay, are also destined to perish over time. Another memento mori is offered by Chiara Camoni's vases, which are exuberantly adorned with the seductive but also malevolent forms of butterflies, and then filled with cut blooms which, rather than being replaced, are just allowed to wither and die.

The presiding genius of *A Matter of Life and Death* is the great Argentinian-Italian artist and theorist Lucio Fontana, whose perforated, gouged or vigorously modelled ceramic works are positioned throughout the exhibition, starting with a punctured egg-like terracotta sphere in first room. Fontana arrived in Italy as a small child at the beginning of the 20th century, just at the same time as a series of violent

earthquakes devastated the country. This eruptive quality fed directly into his ceramic work where he made piercings and slits into clay, as well as his better known holes and cuts into canvas. Fontana's revelling in the properties and processes of clay sets the tone for this exhibition, and his description of his ceramic works as "terremotata ma firma" (earthquaked but motionless) could also have been its title.

Instead, *A Matter of Life and Death* is named after the classic 1946 Powell and Pressburger film in which a World War II fighter pilot, played by David Niven, bales out of his plane and finds himself neither alive nor dead. Suspended in a limbo place between these two states, he has to bargain for his life, in a place somewhere between heaven and hell. Similarly it is the uncertain status of clay, encompassing both fragility and strength, beauty and abjection, that is the central theme of the show. The stuff of the earth, ceramics are shaped, fashioned but also frequently destroyed by the water and fire that give them their form. Both resilient and delicate, works made from clay can survive in all climates for millennia, but also be shattered by a misfiring or a chance topple. At every stage, as everyone working with ceramics knows, the potential for catastrophe is never far away.



Artwork: Andrew Lord.
Courtesy the artist, Gladstone Gallery and Thomas Dane Gallery. Photo: Maurizio Esposito

So what better setting for this exploration of elemental, existential precarity than Naples, a city stacked around a watery bay and presided over by a volcano? A place of beauty and resilience, it is redolent of death and drama: below the streets is a maze of underground catacombs piled with the bones of the dead and even the bollards are topped by skulls. Roofed with clay, floored with terracotta, Naples is also the home of Capodimonte porcelain. It bristles with archaeological, anthropological and ceramic wonders, and the drama, atmosphere and instability of this ancient and often violent city infuses every work in this exhibition.

This Neapolitan setting highlights the lava-like quality of Anya Gallaccio's squirming lustrous forms, it gives Lynda Benglis' shimmying strips and slabs of brilliantly glazed clay assume a baroque curvaceousness and accentuates the association of Philip King's sculptures with classical vases, jugs and pitchers, at the same time as they strike human poses with their bulbous bellies, angular handles and protruding spouts. A more contained energy is to be found in the poised pots of Magdalene Odundo which also nod to the vessels exhumed from Pompeian ash as they hover perilously *en pointe* on their plinths, their surfaces smoked with the patterning of repeated firings.

Sometimes a sense of destruction is built into the work itself. Andrew Lord's wall-mounted circle of sixteen soaring swallows flaunt the breakages to their wings and tails in golden seams of Japanese kintsugi repair; while the dusty pile of destroyed blooms lying below Phoebe Cummings's sumptuous floral sconce is all that is left of the earlier version that unexpectedly fell to the floor, dramatically foretelling the ultimate fate of the current piece once the ambient temperature has caused all its unglazed leaves and petals to crumble into dust. Cummings' works are not supposed to survive this show: another even more intricate unfired clay confection slowly oozes a trickle of water that will ultimately melt all its intricate detail into a muddy mass .

Thomas Dane Gallery overlooks the bay of Naples and this volatile watery ambience also makes its presence felt. Serena Korda makes direct reference to the dramatic vista in a gigantic ceramic necklace made especially for this show. Draped across doors and spilling onto the floor, it is strung with huge decorative baubles in the shape of exotic fruit, as well as sweeping, double-faced weeping mermaid's head which apparently refers to the mythological sirens that tempted sailors from their boats. Breaking away from this chain are a series of grotesque severed ceramic hands and tentacled creatures that seem to be scuttling across the floor towards a lively pouting fish by Lucio Fontana.

The baroque grotesquery and ornament-overload of Naples finds more echoes in Korda's other series of big-bellied ceramic and stoneware bottles which have bearded—and in one case vomiting—faces and surfaces that variously sprout multiple breasts, atom-bomb clouds and a vaginal gash. Contrary to their appearance, these excessive, suggestive vessels are designed to contain not liquids but air, and they sit, waiting to be blown into and activated as part of Korda's "jug orchestra".

But while this particular orchestra may be silenced there is no shortage of animation in this dynamic, vibrant exhibition. In Jenni Lomax's hands, clay is yet again confirmed as both a timeless and a timely medium, and especially in this dramatic city which teems with both life and death. But whether in Naples or beyond, this parade of marvellous, multifarious ceramics offers a powerful and unsettling metaphor for our current volatile times where nothing is fixed, static or certain.

• A Matter of Life and Death, *Thomas Dane Gallery, Naples, until 28 May*

LISSON GALLERY

The Nation
19 May 2021



Encounters With the Unknown

Returning to New York's galleries in search of surprise.

By Barry Schwabsky



Masaomi Yasunaga's *Shedding Bark*, 2021. (Courtesy of Lisson Gallery)

As everyone knows, the affluent left New York City in droves during the coronavirus pandemic, taking social distancing to an extreme by decamping to vacation homes in the Hudson Valley and Long Island. The art market followed. Manhattan galleries began opening satellites in the Hamptons. For the most part, they seemed to be unimaginatively displaying stock on hand. I remember, last summer, wandering into one of the East Hampton galleries and striking up a conversation with the attendant, who explained to me that the random selection of blue-chip works on hand was the intended contents of the gallery's booth at that year's Basel art fair, which had of course been canceled.

When something unusual turns up in a context like that, it stands out. That was the case with an exhibition by Masaomi Yasunaga at the East Hampton outpost of the Lisson Gallery, the venerable London showcase for, mostly, conceptual and minimal art, which opened its New York branch in 2016. I didn't stumble into this show at random, as with Vidales's; an image in a press release caught my eye. Far from specializing in either conceptualism or minimalism, this Japanese artist, born in 1982 and living in the Mie prefecture, makes ceramics. But whether this is really the right word for his work is a question I'll come to shortly. He makes things that are materially overwhelming and rough, though generally modest in scale. (The largest of the pieces on view is about four feet high, but most are much smaller.) Although mostly he uses highly irregular or distorted versions of traditional vessel forms, what's immediately striking about the pieces I saw are their surfaces: gnarled, lumpy, dense with stones and soil. And then their shapes are extremely varied: Vessels, yes, but to characterize them individually might mean having to resort to far-flung episodes in the history of pottery-making—to speak of jugs, ewers, amphorae, reliquaries, costrels, or who knows what, and to draw comparisons with Greek or Pre-Columbian typologies as much as Asian ones.

Yet, in a sense, Yasunaga is a sort of minimalist. What he has minimized is precisely the traditional material of his craft, the very thing that normally defines it. His “ceramics” are created without clay. Instead, he employs glaze—the glassy substance normally used as an external coating to decorate and waterproof a ceramic object—as his primary medium.

In fact, many of Yasunaga's objects look more like they're made of unusually coarse concrete than anything else. I don't really understand how he manages to coax a material that's normally not self-supporting to hold these agglomerations together and function as the structural basis of his forms. The gallery press release explains it this way: “Combined with unique raw materials such as feldspars, whole rocks, metal or glass powders, Yasunaga's forms are buried in various strata of sand or kaolin (unrefined porcelain clay) to preserve their structure in the firing stage. After cooling, Yasunaga's sculptures are excavated from their beds in a studio process analogous to archaeological excavation and discovery.” In any case, the resulting objects don't look quite like anything I've

seen before. But the gallery's evocation of archaeological finds is apt; encrusted as they are with pebbles and sand, one might well imagine that these objects had been dredged up from some ancient burial site where they have lain for eons, their forms distorted by the pressure of the earth's weight as they've accreted all sorts of mineral substances foreign to their original makeup.

Looking at these rugged, powerful, encrusted forms that allude to familiar everyday functional objects despite seeming so alien, I couldn't help thinking of Sigmund Freud's recurrent comparison of his patients' psychoanalytic quarrying of memories to an archaeological excavation, an analogy he always kept at the forefront of both his own and his patients' awareness by turning his consulting room into a sort of miniature archaeological museum stuffed with antiquities. As one commentator on this side of Freud's thinking has observed, the upshot is that "the repressed memories brought back to life and...pictures and relics of one's past...are kept as museum pieces—carefully put out of the way from everyday business, but near enough for contemplation and further study." Yasunaga's works likewise seem to be about the structure of memory—how it transforms things in the process of preserving them.

In the gallery, many of the pieces are arrayed on beds of gravel. At times the presentation is unfortunate—more space would make it easier to appreciate each one individually. But seeing them as an ensemble brings out another possibility: One can easily imagine the forms crumbling and merging with the loose aggregate. In that sense they are ambiguous. To think of them as artifacts unearthed after a long sleep in the earth is to imagine a kind of resurrection, a rediscovery that brings ancient things new life, but also evokes death and dissolution. Far from being a contradiction, this duality is what, beyond their novelty in process and appearance, gives Yasunaga's works their poignancy and power.

LISSON GALLERY

Air Mail
19 September 2020



Sterling Ruby & Masaomi Yasunaga, installation view, 2020. Courtesy of Nonaka-Hill, Los Angeles.

Sterling Ruby & Masaomi Yasunaga

SEPTEMBER 19 – OCTOBER 31, 2020
NONAKA-HILL / LOS ANGELES / ART

California-based artist Sterling Ruby and Japan-based artist Masaomi Yasunaga are separated by the Pacific Ocean, but this show brings them together as two innovative masters of ceramics. Made of earthen matter, the basins, baskets, vessels, bowls, animals, shells, and flowers on display are fabulously delicate and otherworldly. And no wonder, both artists have been inspired by archaeology and excavation. Recalling his roots in Amish Pennsylvania, Ruby sees humility in the preservation and use of objects transformed by the earth. Yasunaga sees excavation as a way to understand and produce finished work. The idea of accretion—in terms of color, patina, and surface matter—is alive in this art. —E.C.

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Nonaka-Hill
720 N Highland Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90038
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The Los Angeles Times
5 July 2019

Los Angeles Times

Review: Gravel, glass and glaze: The radical ceramics of Masaomi Yasunaga



The Masaomi Yasunaga installation at Nonaka-Hill. (From Nonaka-Hill)

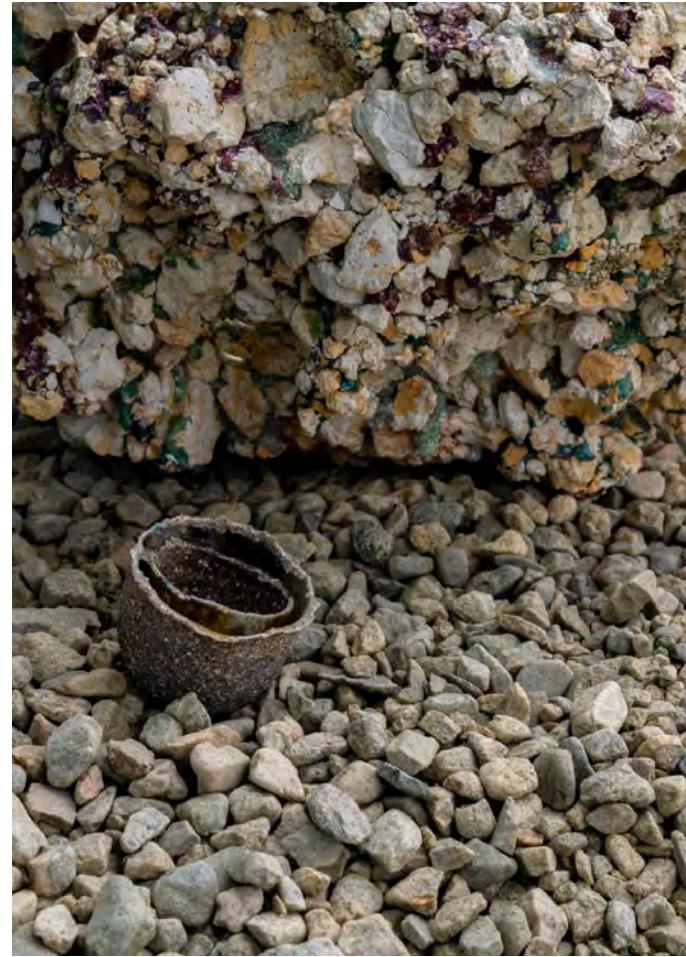
By LEAH OLLMAN
JULY 5, 2019 10:54 AM PT

If Masaomi Yasunaga's astonishing ceramic sculptures were parts of speech, they would be at once both nouns and verbs. They are extraordinary objects, tactile things with insistent, engrossing physicality. They are also so process-oriented, so action-driven, that they seem in some sort of continuous temporal motion, existing simultaneously in multiple tenses: present and past, conditional and subjunctive.

Some 30 vessels rest on a raised bed of gravel running the length of Nonaka-Hill gallery in L.A. The installation evokes a raised tomb, reinforcing an impression of the works as excavated, unearthed. Many have surfaces encrusted with stone bits. One large bowl appears entirely comprised of rubble, its walls a thick, white, rocky crust, pocked with voids and graced with passages of glassy jade and violet. Other pieces are more delicate — a little cup, for instance, with walls like a fine, crisp shell, nests within another, just slightly larger, to yield an intimate meditation in umber and taupe.



Detail of the Masaomi Yasunaga installation at Nonaka-Hill (From Nonaka-Hill)





Detail of the Masaomi Yasunaga installation at Nonaka-Hill (From Nonaka-Hill)

For every rugged and raw gesture, there are others with roots in refined tradition, jars with graceful silhouettes and finely shaped handles. Relics from ancient Rome come to mind — urns and oil lamps. Across a long shelf in the adjoining space parades a lyrical little menagerie: vessels in the form of birds, a turtle, perhaps a snail. Nearby sits a stunning, small cup of aqua glass with a white-rimmed lip and grit-barnacled base, suggesting oceanic salvage and organic decay. Yasunaga titles this piece, and several others, “Sai,” meaning to break or collapse. “Tokeru Utsuwa,” defined as melting vessel, is the name of a few other pieces. The forces of erosion act here as a kind of generative impulse, unmaking as inspiration to make.



“Sai,” Masaomi Yasunaga at Nonaka-Hill (From Nonaka-Hill)

Material transformation is fundamental to ceramics, but what Yasunaga does with clay, glaze, ash and glass is radically inventive as well as profuse in metaphorical resonance. Many pieces are identified as made only of glaze. Through a process involving burial in sand, soil or stone, Yasunaga turns what is conventionally used as a skin to sheathe a clay body into a body itself, both bone and flesh. Extracting the works from the kiln and placing them atop a bed of gravel furthers the notion of reciprocity between what is below ground and what is above, between archaeological time’s expansive breadth and the immediate now of touch, utility and sensual reverie. The work feels at once primal and urgent.

Yasunaga has exhibited extensively in his native Japan, but this is his first solo show in the U.S. In turns raw and elegant, it is never less than thrilling.

*Nonaka-Hill, 720 N. Highland Ave., L.A. Tuesdays-Saturdays, through July 20.
(323) 450-9409, nonaka-hill.com*



"Empty Creature" by Masaomi Yasunaga, 2019. Glaze, 3-9/16 inches by 3-9/16 inches by 3-3/16 inches. (From Nonaka-Hill)

LISSON GALLERY

Art Viewer
9 July 2019

Art Viewer

Masaomi Yasunaga and Kunié Sugiura at Nonaka-Hill

July 9, 2019



Artists: Masaomi Yasunaga and Kunié Sugiura

Venue: Nonaka-Hill, Los Angeles, US

Date: June 1 – July 20, 2019

Photography: images copyright and courtesy of the artists and Nonaka-Hill, Los Angeles

Masaomi Yasunaga

(Born 1982, Osaka Japan. Living and working in Iga, Mie Prefecture, Japan)

In a gesture which has little precedence, Masaomi Yasunaga removed clay from his ceramic forms, and builds his sculptures using glaze as the primary structural element. At Nonaka-Hill, the artist's first solo exhibition outside of Asia, Yasunaga presents numerous recent sculptures expressing a variety of vessel forms, placed on a bed of common gravel.

Yasunaga studied ceramics under Satoru Hoshino, a second-generation proponent of the avant-garde ceramic group, *Sodeisha* (in kanji, 走泥社 literally means, crawling through the mud). Founded in Kyoto in 1948, in the aftermath of WWII, *Sodeisha* broke away from long-established conventions of Japanese ceramics, resolving to create non-functional sculptural works. Continuing with this ethos, Yasunaga's sculptures of vessels may or may not be functional, and explore an instable boundary between functional and fine arts.

By sculpting in glaze, Yasunaga's works reimagine the use of ceramics' conventional materials. Glaze, most commonly used to apply color, luster and finish onto the surface of clay-built ceramics, responds to different variables and often produces unexpected outcomes. Unlike clay objects which maintain their original form when fired in the kiln, Yasunaga's glaze objects melt, so they must be buried in trays of sand, soil or rocks to retain their form. Once inside the kiln, the viscous molten glaze adheres to the surrounding earthen material. After firing and cooling, Yasunaga unburies his objects in a studio process which parallels the surprises of archeological excavation, and painstakingly removes the excess sand and rocks from the interstices of the objects. The resulting artworks range from smooth to heavily encrusted.

Yasunaga's presentation, which verges on camouflage, resembles the beds of stone from which the works emerge after the kiln. It also embraces the narratives which his objects conjure for most viewers; that the sculptures resemble artifacts excavated from the bottom of the ocean floor or buried underground amongst ancient ruins. As such, these objects, imagined to have been lost for vast periods of time and now found, retain the global vessel styles and handwork of imagined ceramics makers (other than Yasunaga) from eons before. Some objects seem whole, while others seem broken, arousing phenomenological thinking reflected in the artwork's titles, all which infer something that was, or is no longer; *Sai* (碎) means to break or collapse, *Tokeru Utsuwa* (溶ける器) translates to melting vessel, *Dakkaku* (脱穀) is defined as threshing, and *Hako No Kokkaku* (箱の骨格) signifies a skeleton.

Feeling that with new life or death, comes a moment when many things may change, Yasunaga responded to the passing of his grandmother ten years ago by incorporating her cremated bone remains into the glaze of his hand-crafted funerary urns. This gesture compelled him to appreciate the emotional and expressive potentials in ceramics. Three years ago, with the joy of the birth of his eldest son, Yasunaga began to hybridize his empty container forms with depictions of animals from around where he was born. Rendered in Yasunaga's earthen materials, these *Empty creatures* conjure associations to numerous histories and places, and collectively form an unlikely geologic menagerie.

Yasunaga's exploratory approach to ceramic making delves deeper than its experimental application of materials, his sculptures give perspective to the human relationship to time.



Masaomi Yasunaga and Kunié Sugiura, 2019, exhibition view, Nonaka-Hill, Los Angeles



Masaomi Yasunaga, 2019, exhibition view, Nonaka-Hill, Los Angeles



Masaomi Yasunaga, 2019, exhibition view, Nonaka-Hill, Los Angeles



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