

Weekly Cultural News

Substitute for monthly Cultural News March 22 - 28, 2021 (Reiwa 3)

Keep Japanese Culture Alive



Yoshitomo Nara exhibition at the Broad Contemporary Art Museum building in the campus of Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art to reopen April 1 with first international retrospective of Yoshitomo Nara

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art ([LACMA](#)) will reopen on April 1 with the exhibition of *Yoshitomo Nara*, the first international retrospective of artist Yoshitomo Nara (b. 1959) at BCAM, Level 2 through July 5, 2021.

The exhibition surveys more than 30 years of the artist's work—from 1984 to 2020—through the lens of his longtime passion to music.

Known for his portraits, Nara's subjects are vaguely ominous-looking characters with penetrating gazes that occasionally wield objects just

as knives or cigarettes, as well as heads and figures that float in dreamy landscapes. Nara's oeuvre reflects the artist's raw encounters with his inner self, taking inspiration from memories of his childhood; music; literature; studying and living in Germany (1988–2000); exploring his roots in Asia; and modern art from Europe and Japan.

Yoshitomo Nara comprises more than 100 major works, including paintings, drawings, sculpture, ceramics, an installation that recreates his drawing studio, and neverbefore-exhibited idea sketches that reflect the artist's empathic eye.



Yoshitomo Nara exhibition at the Broad Contemporary Art Museum building in the campus of Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

“Yoshitomo Nara is among the most important Japanese artists of his generation”

Comments on *Yoshitomo Nara* at [Los Angeles County Museum of Art](#), from April 1 through July 5, are following:

Michael Govan, LACMA CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director

Yoshitomo Nara is among the most important Japanese artists of his generation, and one of the most recognized artists working today. We are excited to be organizing this international retrospective. Nara's art reflects his interest in art and culture of both past and present. His interest in art history—ranging from 12th-century Japanese Buddhist sculptures and handscroll paintings, Italian early-Renaissance painters, and other European modern influences—mirrors LACMA's encyclopedic nature. Referencing contemporary

music and album covers, Nara possesses the unique ability to capture a complexity of emotions that reflects the cultural psyche of the current generation.

Mika Yoshitake, exhibition curator

Music has been a passion for Nara since he began to listen to folk songs at age nine, and his relationship with music, namely with album cover art, provided him with an unconventional introduction to art history and artistic genres. This passion is seen through Nara's vast record collection, selections of which visitors will see as soon as they enter this exhibition. Through more than 100 works on view, the exhibition will bring new light to Nara's conceptual process.

Weekly Cultural News is an alternative publication for Monthly Cultural News which we had to stop the publication in April 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic.



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Los Angeles County Museum of Art acquires Yoshitomo Nara's *Miss Forest*

In August 2020, [Los Angeles County Museum of Art](#) installed Yoshitomo Nara's *Miss Forest* (LACMA version), a 25-foot, 7-inch tall, 4,446-pound bronze sculpture at the southeast corner of the Broad Contemporary Art Museum building along Wilshire Boulevard.

Purchased with funds from an anonymous donor, *Miss Forest* (LACMA version) is the third work by Yoshitomo Nara to enter LACMA's permanent collection.

Deeply affected by the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami and the resulting Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster in 2011—which occurred only 43 miles north of Nara's studio—the artist found catharsis and creative inspiration in the mental and physical processes of hand-molding clay, some of which he began transforming into bronze.

Among his output of bronze sculptures was *Miss Tannen* (2012), a big-headed girl whose hair rises into the conical point of an evergreen tree. This character became the model for Nara's series of "Miss Forest" bronze sculptures beginning in 2016.

Appearing like a sleeping forest spirit, "Miss Forest" evokes the Shinto tradition of Nara's family lineage and upbringing in the Hirosaki community. Each version of "Miss Forest" is



Yoshitomo Nara, *Miss Forest* (LACMA Version), 2020, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, © Yoshitomo Nara

uniquely imbued with the touch of Nara's hand; her clumped and leafy hair, her button nose, and her closed eyelids are all impressed with organic, hand-molded markings. She is both contemplative and transcendent.

In an interview with exhibition curator Mika Yoshitake, Nara describes the genesis of "Miss Forest":

"In Japanese, it's called 'Moriko' or the child of the forest. Ever since I began to produce works in clay, ... in the beginning, I was making large lumps, but then began to produce works that took the form of plants like a tannenbaum. 'Miss Forest' is the final version of that series.

Amidst the process of the work being made, the image I envisioned was a thing that was connected to the earth, born from the soil of the earth, that grew into the sky... into outer space and thus communicated with the universe like an antenna. It is like a catalyst between the grand earth upon which we place our feet and the sky that our hands cannot reach. Instead of simply being an artwork, the work has that kind of presence. I think of Indigenous people who climb to high places in order to communicate with the sky and recite prayers. There is something similar to this that I feel exists inside of me. And I think that is why that piece was born."

(Source: LACMA Unframed)

Japanese Percussion Lesson #40: Let's learn about Humidity Effect on Drums

By Mariko Watabe

There are dance videos and shamisen videos. But KABUKI HAYASHI (Japanese percussion) videos are rarely found or discussed especially in English or with English subtitles.

I have decided to make them as I believe this art is too precious to be hidden or lost. With the guidance of Master Katada Shinjuro, I am trying to uncover the world of HAYASHI by producing YouTube videos in Japanese language with English subtitles.

To view the previous videos from #01 to #39, visit [Tsuzumibito Chanel at YouTube](#)

Ohayashi Juku (Kabuki Series) #40 <https://youtu.be/zrnvp5C2dyk> is about "Humidity and Its Effect On Drums." This is the second topic for the "Character of Musical Instruments" which compares the difference between the Western orchestra and kabuki music.

All instruments are moisture sensitive. Japanese instruments are very sensitive as they are made out of natural materials and they are very delicate. However, there are instruments which make use of the moisture sensitive character of horsehide. These are Kotsuzumi and Okawa.

Kotsuzumi which has very thin skin creates the soft and deep sound of "Pon." The Okawa, with thick and extremely dry skins, makes the strong



striking sound of "Chon". By controlling the amount of moisture in the drum heads, very precise sounds can be produced which largely contributes to the great dynamic sound of Kabuki Hayashi.

Mariko Watabe has been introducing Kabuki dance and music to American audiences nationwide for over 40 years. She goes by her stage names such as; Kimisen Katada for Hayashi, Kyosho Yamato for Yamatogaku, Kichitoji Kineya for Nagauta; and Marifuji Bando for dance.

She is currently living in Los Angeles area. Her activities and performances are found at <http://fujijapanesemusic.org>

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Uyehara Travel

Once COVID-19 restrictions are lift, Uyehara Travel provides cruises, Okinawa tours, local tours and customized tours. Please contact Tamiko Uyehara for any questions at (213) 680-2499 and tamiko_uyahara@yahoo.co.jp



Mediterranean Cruse

Sep 4-12, 2021, 8 nights, 7 days

From Barcelona, Spain to Venice, Italy

Okinawa Tour in 2022

The 7th Worldwide Uchinanchu Festival is postponed to October 2022. To participate the world festival, Uyehara Travel plans the tour from Los Angeles from Oct.



Consul General encourages activities for playing roles in Japanese American communities and advancing the Japan-U.S. relationship

Consul General Akira Muto presented the Commendation of the Consul General of Japan in Los Angeles to Mr. Haruo Takehana of South Bay area on March 17.

The Commendation of the Consul General was established to recognize an individual or group who has helped advance the mission of the Consulate General and has provided significant contributions to mutual understanding and promoting friendship between Japan and the United States.

Mr. Takehana arrived in the United States in 1967 and worked for 18 years as General Sales Manager in the International Sales Department of commercial steamship company Seatrain Lines, managing four branch offices.

Later he was recruited by Japanese logistics company Suzuyo & Company and worked at the U.S. subsidiary Suzuyo Fritz Freight Systems Inc. as head of the company while also managing an additional subsidiary, Kashiwa Fudosan America Inc.

After retiring from Suzuyo, he established his own company, Takehana Real Estate Services Inc., which specializes in commercial and indus-



Mr. Haruo Takehana, left, and Japanese Consul General Akira Muto at the official residence of the Consul General of Japan.

trial real estate and provides the sales, lease, and management of properties.

Mr. Takehana has served the Japanese American community through volunteering with various non-profit and community organizations.

In 2002, he became a member of the Japanese Community Pioneer Center, which provides health and welfare services to

Japanese American seniors. He is currently serving his fifth term as President.

In 2004, he joined the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California. After serving in a variety of positions, he became President in 2012 and now serves as Advisor.

Mr. Takehana established a scholarship fund for graduate students from Waseda University who come to the U.S. for master's or doctoral degrees and became the first donor to the fund.

The Commendation of the Consul General has been presented to Mr. Takehana as he is expected to continue to play an important role in the Japanese American community and in advancing the Japan-U.S. relationship.

Cultural News seeks \$30,000 donation in 2021



In 1998, **Cultural News** was started by Shige Higashi to promote Japanese culture in Southern California. Due to Corona pandemic, the format of **Cultural News** had to change from monthly paper

to weekly PDF. But the mission of **Cultural News** remains the same.

Non-profit organization Cultural News Association has been formed to support the mission of **Cultural News**. Your contribution would be appreciated at <https://www.culturalnews.com/donation>



きてみんさい広島へ Come to Hiroshima Series #6

**Cultural News presents
free webinar on Hiroshima Castle
Thursday, March 25, 7:00PM – 8:00PM, PDT**

Register https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_jqY0PXhaR0WcQhQHnQpM8w

The original Hiroshima Castle was built in 1589 by warlord Mori Terumoto. Major area plan of the castle was completed by Fukushima Clan around 1600. The castle was occupied by Asano Clan for 250 years in Edo period. In modern Japan, The castle site was used as Army's regional headquarters, and the castle became a target for Atomic bombing. In post war era, Hiroshima Castle plays a symbol of reconstruction of homeland.



As the 65th anniversary gifts, Honolulu Hiroshima Kenjin Kai sent face masks featuring their logo to representatives of Hiroshima Prefecture and Hiroshima City: Left, Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum staff in front of entrance; Right, Gov. Hidehiko Yuzaki.

Honolulu's Hiroshima association sends face masks to their ancestral place Hiroshima Prefecture

The Honolulu Hiroshima Kenjin Kai ([HHKK](#)) was established in 1955 by first- and second-generation immigrants from Hiroshima Prefecture. The HHKK currently has an active membership of more than 500 families and implements many annual programs and causes throughout year.

As the latest activity, the HHKK created face masks featuring their club's logo for members, friends and supporters in an effort to keep them safe and healthy. As it was believed that their HHKK face masks might be accepted as gifts or "omiyage," the officers and directors of this kenjin kai, which commemorated its 65th anniversary of its establishment in 2020, sent their face masks to the people of Hiroshima Prefecture.

In late February, 200 HHKK face masks were sent to Hiroshima Governor Hidehiko Yuzaki, the Prefectural Assembly and other Prefectural leaders and staff. Similarly, another 200 face masks were mailed to Hiroshima City Mayor Kazumi Matsui, the Hiroshima City Council, other City leaders and staff and city-related organizations including the Hiroshima Memorial Peace Museum and even Hiroshima's professional

baseball team, the Hiroshima Toyo Carp.

Additionally, 50 HHKK face masks were distributed to the Tokyo Hiroshima-Ken People's Organization, which is their "sister" kenjin kai.

According to HHKK President Wayne Miyao, the response from these Hiroshima government as well as our "sister" kenjin kai has been overwhelming positive. Governor Hidehiko Yuzaki said, "I was deeply touched by all of your kindhearted thoughtfulness, and it once again reminded me of the deep friendships that we have fostered." Mayor Kazumi Matsui remarked, "The mask is really good because it is light and comfortable to wear. The color black has a strong impact and looks cool."

Miyao commented, "Our HHKK face masks were sent to the Hiroshima Prefectural Government and Hiroshima City Government as a token of our appreciation for the many programs and activities we have conducted with them over the years. Additionally, our face masks will offer protection and safety to them. Finally, it is our hope that our HHKK face masks will serve as a reminder of their friends in Honolulu and the State of Hawaii."