

# Weekly Cultural News

Substitute for monthly Cultural News June 28 - July 04, 2021 (Reiwa 3)

## Keep Japanese Culture Alive



## Los Angeles County Museum of Art

### ***Yoshitomo Nara* exhibition extended to Jan. 2, 2022**

On June 23, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art announced that the current exhibition [Yoshitomo Nara](#) has been extended to January 2, 2022.

*Yoshitomo Nara* is the first international retrospective of artist Yoshitomo Nara (b.1959). The exhibition was originally planned to hold from April 5—August 2, 2020. But due to COVID-19 pandemic, *Yoshitomo Nara* was opened on April 1, 2021, and scheduled to close on July 5, 2021.

*Yoshitomo Nara* exhibition is held at the Broad Contemporary Art Museum (BCAM), level 2 in the LACMA campus.

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.



Watch: [Retrospective Highlights](#)



Listen: [Yoshitomo Nara Soundtrack](#)



Read: [Yoshitomo Nara: A Conversation with Curator Mika Yoshitake](#)

## LACMA: Yoshitomo Nara exhibition extended to Jan. 2, 2022

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Yoshitomo Nara comprises more than 100 major works, including paintings, drawings, sculpture, ceramics, an installation that recreates his drawing studio, and never-before-exhibited idea sketches that reflect the artist's empathic eye.

One of the exhibition highlights includes *Miss Forest*, a 26-foot outdoor painted bronze sculpture that has been installed on Wilshire Boulevard.

Following LACMA's presentation, the exhibition will travel internationally to other museums including the Yuz Museum, Shanghai.

"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," said Michael Govan, LACMA CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director. "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.

"Exhibition curator Mika Yoshitake stated, "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."

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**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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## LACMA: *Yoshitomo Nara* exhibition extended to Jan. 2, 2022

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The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with a foreword by Michael Govan, introductory essay by Mika Yoshitake, and text by Yoshitomo Nara. A limited-edition of the catalogue features a clamshell case with 14 booklets, as well as a vinyl LP with original music and covers by American indie rock band Yo La Tengo on side A and songs from the 1960s and '70s selected by the artist on side B.

Nara's love of music ended up providing him with an unorthodox art education: the images on record covers not only became signifiers for music but also introduced him to a vast array of artistic genres, with covers and their corresponding music merging in his subconscious.

For the young Nara, growing up in Japan among the shadows of war and economic recovery, the records and their covers served as sources of escape and eventually as a valuable form of self-empowerment, allowing him to deal with the complexities of living with the remnants of Japan's imperial past and in close proximity to signs of ongoing conflict.

This exhibition aims to move away from some of the dominant perceptions of Nara's work with

Japan's Neo-Pop movement (largely associated with Takashi Murakami), and also shift the focus from the harshness and intensity of his earlier practice to the self-critical introspection and individuality that have become more prevalent in the quiet, contemplative work he has made in the last decade, particularly since the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami.

The artist's inspiration from the world of 1960s and '70s folk and rock music filters throughout his practice. After taking several lengthy journeys to Europe in 1980, 1983, and 1987 while attending art school at Aichi Prefectural University of the Arts where he obtained his BA and MA, Nara was accepted into the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf and lived in Germany from 1988 to 2000 (Düsseldorf from 1988 to 1993 and in Cologne until 2000).

This was a period of great isolation for Nara, during which he was reminded of his adolescent years in Aomori, and the development of psychological depth and introspection in his paintings.

While Nara's immense popularity within the Neo-Pop milieu has dominated the critical global reception of his practice to this day, having spent his formative years as a young artist in Germany, Nara sees his work more in dialogue with American and European subcultures.

## Japanese Percussion Lesson #54: Narimono for Yamatogaku song “AJISAI”

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 #53, visit [Tsuzumibito Chanel at YouTube](#)

Ohayashi Juku (Kabuki Series) #53 <https://youtu.be/7vQuWFPiliQ> is about the second song of Narimono for Yamatogaku, “AJISAI” (Hydrangea).

Western instruments such as the wind chimes and sleigh bells are used along with the 600-year old kotsuzumi from Noh as well as Kabuki, and the 1400-year old kakko which is a Gagaku instrument, for this modern shamisen song. As with many other Yamatogaku songs, koto accompanies as well to add color and additional beauty to the song.

This is one of the flower-themes songs of Yamatogaku. As with other Yamatogaku songs it is a beautiful song with a female touch. The song, “AJISAI” (Hydrangea), is about a girl who is reminded of past love when she sees a hydrangea glistening in the rain.

This is a modern Japanese song with three parts



where the first and second melodies are repeated with a “dodoitsu” interlude. “Dodoitsu” is a poem read in 7, 7, 7, and 5 syllables.

The founder of Yamatogaku music, Baron Kishichiro Okura, had been aiming for “songs that anyone can sing in everyday life,” and “AJISAI” seems to fit nicely as one of them.

“AJISAI” is a new song being released in 1996. The lyrics were written with using the modern Japanese language by the popular song writer, Michinosuke Iwata. The Shamisen part was composed by Hisamitsu Yamato, the second headmaster of Yamatogaku, and the Narimono by Kisaku Katada.

The use of both the Western instruments and Japanese traditional narimono gives this song mysterious beauty.

*Mariko Watabe has been introducing Kabuki dance and music to American audiences nationwide for over 40 years.*

<http://fujijapanesemusic.org>

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# Uyehara Travel

## Okinawa Tour in 2022

Uyehara Travel provides the 7th Worldwide Uchinanchu Festival tour from Oct. 28—Nov. 5, 2022 from Los Angeles.



**Tour Fee: \$2,800 + fuel surcharge, tax per person in twin room. \$400 surcharge for single room use.**

**Early Bird Special: \$2,600 by Oct. 31, 2021 .**

Full price refund guaranteed by Feb. 28, 2022. \$300 deposit required upon reservation.

The Worldwide Uchinanchu Festival has been held in Naha, Okinawa since 1990 to honor the achievements of Okinawan people from all over the world.

The 7th Festival originally planned in 2021 has been postponed to 2022 due to COVID-19 pandemic.

The 7th Festival will start the eve event on Oct. 30, and the main festival will be held from Oct. 31 through Nov. 3, 2022. In 2022,

many events also will be prepared for the 50th anniversary of Okinawa Reversion from the U.S. Uyehara Travel also provides airline ticket arrangements for deviating plans.

## Uyehara Travel

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TOKYO, JAPAN - MAY 09: A general view during the Ready Steady Tokyo - Athletics Olympic test event, part of the World Athletics Continental Tour, at the National Stadium on May 09, 2021 in Tokyo, Japan. (Photo by Toru Hanai/Getty Images) 2021 Getty Images

## Latest on Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games

(Japan Focus Newsletter June edition by the Consulate General of Japan in Los Angeles)

With less than one month to go until the Tokyo 2020 games begin on July 23, Japan continues to place the highest priority on delivering safe and secure Games for all. At their recent summit, [Group of Seven leaders reiterated their support for Tokyo 2020](#).

On June 15, [the third and final edition of the Tokyo 2020 Playbooks](#), which serves as the basis of the game plan to ensure that all Olympic and Paralympic Games participants and the people of Japan stay safe and healthy this summer, was released.

Also, on June 21, [an official announcement was made that the spectator limit for the Olympic Games](#) has been set at 50% of venue capacity, up to a maximum of 10,000 people. A decision on the Paralympic Games will be made by mid-July.

(<https://olympics.com>) During a meeting held between the five parties June 21, the IOC, IPC,

Tokyo 2020, Tokyo Metropolitan Government and the Government of Japan agreed for the spectator limit for the Olympic Games to be set at "50 per cent of venue capacity, up to a maximum of 10,000 people" at all venues, taking into consideration the government's restrictions on public events.

The Japanese parties have formulated guidelines for spectators aimed at ensuring safe and secure environments. These stipulate that masks should be worn in venues at all times; speaking in a loud voice or shouting will be prohibited; congestion should be avoided by means of appropriate announcements; and visitors should leave venues in a staggered manner.

Given the COVID-19 situation, the Japanese parties intend to look into either cancelling or reducing the scale of any live sites and public viewing events to minimize the movement of people, review any other Games-related events, and establish new safe and secure ways of cheering and supporting the athletes.