



Mio Shirai

Swing Down Cosmic Chariot



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Tuesday, February 10, 2026 - Saturday, April 4

* An opening reception will be held on Saturday 28 Feb from 17:00-19:00

Venue: Yumiko Chiba Associates

ROPPONGI HILLS Hollywood Beauty Plaza 3rd Floor, 6-4-1 Roppongi, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106-0032 Japan

Gallery Hours: 12:00-19:00

Closed on Sundays, Mondays, and national holidays

Yumiko Chiba Associates is excited to announce an exhibition of work by Mio Shirai, whose ever-evolving practice has since the late 1980s traversed multiple genres including installation art, objects, textiles and video. Embarking on a fuller exploration of painting in the 2000s, since then Shirai has produced work characterized by the interplay of abstract forms and symbolic imagery suggesting the cycle of life, and of the cosmos. The 2024 solo exhibition *Clearing in Woods* at the Fuchu Art Museum demonstrated the artist's continuing contemplation of this theme, and the sheer breadth of her expressive potential.

This exhibition presents paintings from what has been an especially productive few years for Shirai, including many featuring geometric lines, parabolas and spirals. The title *Swing Down Cosmic Chariot* is taken from the old Negro spiritual "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," which begins with the line "Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home"—the chariot here possessing symbolic significance as a means of transport to another place.

For Shirai, who says she makes paintings and sculptures "as exits to other worlds that differ from the here and now," painting and sculpture consistently act as a portal, or perhaps an escape hatch, to another space and time, simultaneously manifesting as that same place, breaking through into our own realm. Don't miss the latest offerings from an artist who employs painting to unpack the structure of the world, and cause new movement, and new cycles, to arise there.



Artist Statement

I make paintings and sculptures as exits to other worlds that differ from the here and now. Though dealing with real matter, by analyzing the composition, form and/or structure of that matter and its surrounding context, and rearranging/reorganizing these, I attempt to construct realms that deviate from conventional norms.

My paintings of recent years, employing geometric forms, fluid lines, parabolas, spirals and so on, juxtapose through lines and strokes the motions of being enfolded inside, and discharged outside, in the pursuit of visual expression where spaces seem to repeatedly contract and expand along with the varying volumes produced by coloring.

The title of the exhibition derives from the old Negro spiritual “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,” which sung of the chariot as a symbol of salvation and homecoming that originally appeared in the visions of the prophet Elijah in the 9th century BC, and Ezekiel in the 6th century BC. Multiple versions emerged in the 20th century as the battle hymn of those fighting for freedom during the civil rights movement. In 1976, this chariot with four wheels moving at whim through the heavens to right and left, forward and back, became a sci-fi-infused myth, summoned on stage as a UFO come to save a dying world during performances of “Mothership Connection” by the P-Funk collective band Parliament. The diamond appearing in a painting in this exhibition is made by joining two triangles, the apexes of which indicate top and bottom, to suggest a realm with no top or bottom, and simultaneously resembles a classic “lemon” hand grenade exploding into light. The new, square works are constructed with the four sides of the canvas folding inward, and encapsulate the motion of a chariot moving freely through the heavens in all directions, as they endeavor to offer emergency exits to some other world.

Mio Shirai

【Talk Event】

Mio Shirai x Shiori Sahara (The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo Assistant Curator)

Date: Saturday, March 28, 2026

*Event details will be announced on the Yumiko Chiba Associates website/social media.

■Related Information**【Group Exhibition】**

“MOMAT Collection Focus Enokura Koji: A Retrospective”

Date: Wednesday, 5 November 2025 - Sunday, 8 February 2026

Venue: The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo Gallery 4(2nd floor), Tokyo

■Artist Profile**Mio Shirai**

1962	Born in Kyoto
1986	Graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Tokyo University of Fine Arts
1988	Completed the Fine Arts Graduate School in Tokyo University of Fine Arts
1994-2006	Lives and works in New York
2007-	Lives and works in Tokyo

Selected Solo Exhibitions

1987	Kaneko Art G1, Tokyo
1988	Kobayashi Gallery, Tokyo Muramatsu Gallery, Tokyo
1989	Hillside Gallery, Tokyo Kyoni Gallery, Tokyo
1990	HALS Gallery, Tokyo Hillside Gallery, Tokyo
1991	Concept Space, Shibukawa, Gunma Hillside Gallery, Tokyo
1992	SOKO Tokyo Gallery, Tokyo
1993	Hillside Gallery, Tokyo Mio Shirai – Sight and Metaphor, Itoki Ginza New Office Gallery, Tokyo
1994	Memory's Gallery, Nagoya



	Mio Shirai: ill seen ill said, East West Cultural Studies, New York
1996	One Day One Show, Gallery 360, Tokyo
	Red Mill Gallery, Jonson, Vermont, USA
	Texture Girl, Modern Culture, New York
1998	Hillside Gallery, Tokyo
2003	Joy of Life, Hillside Gallery, Tokyo
2005	New Kingdoms, chashama 217 gallery, New York
2006	Finding Shangri-la, Art Front Gallery, Tokyo
2008	Forever Afternoon, Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland, England
2009	Forever Afternoon, BankART NYK, Yokohama
	Unknown Binding, BankART NYK, Yokohama
2011	Magic Carpet Ride, Gallery cocon, Tokyo
2013	ROADSHOW, void +, Tokyo
	Spring Mad Tea Party, Traumaris, Tokyo
2016	Book of Silence, nap gallery, Tokyo
2017	Cosmicomics, Time & Style Midtown, Tokyo
2018	Time is Vertical, nap gallery, Tokyo
2020	Météore 2 Conversion, gallery21yo-j, Tokyo
2023–24	Mio Shirai: Clearing in Woods, Fuchu Art Museum, Tokyo
2024	Selected from the CCMA Collection Special Edition: SHIRAI Mio, Chiba City Museum of Art, Chiba

Selected Group Exhibitions

1986	Fujiyama Geisha, Kyoto University of Arts, Kyoto/ Daiko Electric Lighting Labo, Tokyo
1987	Fujiyama Geisha, Daiko Electric Lighting Labo, Tokyo/ Osaka International Center, Osaka
1988	Open the Gate, Tokyo University of Fine Arts, Tokyo
1989	Art Today '89, The Museum of Modern Art Takanawa, Karuizawa, Nagano
	Summer Art Festival in Hakusyu, Hakushu-cho, Yamanashi
1990	Crossing '90, Kaneko Art G1, Tokyo
	Drawing Exhibition, Hillside Gallery, Tokyo
	Hillside Documents, Hillside Gallery
	Imaginative Monument, Kaneko Art G1, Tokyo
	Shibukawa Triennial Exhibition of Contemporary Sculpture '90, Shibukawa, Gunma
	The 26th Artists Today: Trias, Yokohama Citizen Gallery, Yokohama
	Triangulation of Modernism, Gallery Furukawa, Tokyo
1991	Drawing Exhibitions of Hakusyu Summer Festival, Gallery Furukawa, Tokyo
	Future Chronicle, Memory's Gallery, Nagoya
	Take Art Collection, Spiral Garden, Tokyo
	The 7th Triennale India, The Lalit Kala Academy, New Delhi, India
	The Silent Passion: Seven Artists from Japan, Tochigi Prefectural Museum of Fine Arts, Utsunomiya, Tochigi
	Three Artists' Show, Tokyo Gallery, Tokyo
1992	1st Habitart Exhibition: Making Room – space as material, Pacifico Yokohama
	Haruki Collection, SOKO Tokyo Gallery, Tokyo
	Jennifer Bolande, Mio Shirai, Marie-Theres Huber, Silvia Gertsch, Pipilotti Rist, Shedhalle, Zurich, Switzerland
1993	00 Collaboration, Sagacho Exhibit Space
	Bolande, Dopitova, Rist, Shirai, The Municipal Museum, Prague, Czech
	Drawing Exhibition, Hillside Gallery, Tokyo
	Exchange2, Shedhalle, Zurich, Switzerland
	Nomad, Temporary Kunsthalle, Munich, Germany
	Oro d'autore: Giappone e Stati d'Uniti d'America, Basilica Inferiore di San Francesco, Arezzo, Italy
1994	Double Booking, Gallery 360°, Tokyo
	Kunst Heimat Kunst, Kunstlerhaus Graz, Austria
	Let the Artists Live!, Exit Art and the First World, New York
	Watched While Sleeping, Hillside Gallery
1995	6. Triennale der Kleinplastick 1995: Europe – Ostasien, Sudwest LB Forum, Stuttgart, Germany
	The 6th Fukui International Video Biennale, Fukui
1996	Image of Woman in Japanese Contemporary Art 1930's-90's, The Shoto Museum of Art, Tokyo
	Inside of Works, Outside of Works, Itabashi Art Museum, Tokyo
	On Camp/ Off Base, Tokyo Big Site, Tokyo
	Requiem: Koji Enokura and 33 Artists, Saito Memorial Kawaguchi Museum of Contemporary Art, Kawaguchi, Saitama
	Resurrecting Memories, Dojunkan Daikanyama Apartment, Tokyo
	Socie, Sagacho Exhibit Space, Tokyo
1997	Travel Sized, City Collage New York, New York



1998 Global Housewarming, First Floor Gallery, Melbourne, Australia

2000 3+1: Oki, Shirai, Matsuyama and Takezaki, Ota Fine Arts, Tokyo
Echigo Tsumari Art Triennale 2000, Matsudai, Niigata

2001 The Art of Collecting, Flint Institute of Art, Michigan, USA

2003 Jack the Pelican Presents, New York
Night of 1000 Drawings, Artists' Space, New York

2004 Art/ Room, Hillside Gallery, Tokyo

2005 chashama exhibition: the Artist in Residence of 40 Worth Street, chashama, New York

2006 Echigo Tsumari Art Triennale 2006, Niigata

2006 Le Salon Violet, New York

2007 Explosion, BankART NYK, Tokyo
Hillside Gallery: for New Start, Hillside Forum, Tokyo
Restaurant 1929: Food and Contemporary Art Part3, BankART 1929, Yokohama
Small Works for 'Koji Enokura documentary film', Space 23°C, Tokyo

2008 Arttist File 2008: The NACT Annual Show of Contemporary Art, The National Art Center, Tokyo
BankART Life2, Yokohama
Restaurant 1929: Food and Contemporary Art Part4, BankART 1929, Yokohama

2009 Berlin-Tokyo Communication Art, Higure 17-15, Tokyo
The 1st Tokorozawa Biennial of Contemporary Art: Siding Railroad, Seibu Railroad factory, Saitama
explosion shirt, explosion tokyo, Tokyo

2010 City Beats+Live Explosions, BankART NYK hall, Yokohama
Full Course: Food and Contemporary Art Part6, Honcho Experimental Gallery, Yokohama
To-Be Tokyo+Berlin Communication Art, Freies Museum Berlin, Germany
Unstern! / Sinistre, Galerie Omotesando+Muse F, Tokyo

2011 Akihiko Takami Memorial Exhibition, Galerie Omotesando+Musse F, Tokyo
Keisuke Yamaguchi / Mio Shirai, Kaneko Art Tokyo, Tokyo
Shin Minatomura: BankART Life3; Yokohama Triennale 2011 related program, Shinko-pier, Yokohama
Teenage Spirit, explosion tokyo viewing room, Tokyo
Unknown, Ayumi Gallery, Tokyo

2012 Matsushiro Contemporary Art Festival, Nagano
Progressive Maria, Waseda Scott Hall Gallery, Tokyo
Unknown Life, Ayumi Gallery, Tokyo
Unknown Voice, youkobo Art Space, Tokyo

2013 Aichi Triennale 2013, Aichi Arts Center, Aichi
Art Program Ome 2013, Ome Municipal Museum of Art, Tokyo
Art and Music: Synesthesia Experimental Theater; The 3rd Tokyo Art Meeting, The University Art Museum, Tokyo University of the Arts
Setouchi Triennale 2013, Uno port, Okayama
Unknown History, Takahashi Building, Kagurazaka, Tokyo

2014 Dreams of East Asia, BankART NYK, Yokohama
Keitaro Higashi, Chieo Senzaki, Kazumi Nakamura, Hotaro Koyama, Tatsuo Miyajima, Kazuhiro Nomura, Mio Shirai, Hideki Nagahashi, and Koji Enokura, Space23°C, Tokyo

2015 House Beats, explosion tokyo, Tokyo
KachoFugetsu: Flower Bird Wind Moon, Santa Monica Arena1, Los Angels
Mio Shirai x Sachio Tsurumi [game theory], nap gallery, Tokyo
Reflection: In Return to Koji Enokura, Akiyama Gallery, Space23°C, Tokyo

2017 BankART Life V – Kanko, Yokohama
Leaving Language in a Japanese Limousine, The Metropole Gallery, Folkestone, UK
Abracadabra of Drawing, Ichihara Lakeside Museum, Chiba

2018 Paintings Here and Now, Fuchu Art Museum, Tokyo
Physica – Principles of Art As Natural Philosophy Kenjiro Okazaki, Mio Shirai, Hisao Matsuura, Galerie Omotesando + Musee F, Tokyo

2019 Art Busan 2019, Bexco Exhibition Center, Busan
Earth Attack, Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art
Heterotopia, Group Show of Contemporary Artists 2019, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum
Merci Summer, nap gallery, Tokyo

2020 CADAN Showcase 02 Summertime Blues '2020, CADAN Yurakucyo, Tokyo
Sagacho Exhibit Space 1983 – 2000 Fixed-Point Observation of Contemporary Art, The Museum of Modern Art, Gunma
Spring Lightning, nap gallery, Tokyo

2021 Watercolor Revisited, Touching with the eyes, thinking with the hands, Tokyo Art Museum

2022 Alternative! Kazuko Koike Exhibition Soft-Power Movement of Art & Design, 3331 Arts Chiyoda, Tokyo

2024 BankART Life7: Urban Nesting, Yokohama Display Museum, Kanagawa
Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale 2024, Kamigo Clove-za, Tsunan-cho, Niigata



2025 ART OSAKA Screening Program, To Being Seen: Exploring Artistic Expression Moving Image Works from the 1960 to Today in Japan, Osaka City Central Public Hall, Osaka
Echigo-Tsumari Art Field, Kamigo Clove-za, Tsunan-cho, Niigata
MOMAT Collection Focus, Enokura Koji: A Retrospective, The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo
We have not died in 3.5 billion years, Art Factory Jonanjima Gallery 1045, Tokyo

Performances

2009 Hair Player Flame, Toshimitsu Nakagawa, Mineki Murata, Mio Shirai, Junki Kono, Daikanyama Installation 2009 related project, +ING Attack, Tokyo
explosion K/N/S (Toshimitsu Nakagawa, Hiroyuki Knimune, Mio Shirai) , blanClass

2010 One Cent Van God (Shiho Kagabu, Sachie Kimura, Keisuke Oki, Mio Shirai), City Beats + Live Explosions, BankART NYK, Yokohama
One Cent Van God (Shiho Kagabu, Sachie Kimura, Keisuke Oki, Mio Shirai), After Hours, Full Course- Food and contemporary art part6, Honcho experimental gallery, Yokohama

2011 April Doctor, Mio Shirai, Keisuke Oki, Ayumi Gallery
April Doctor, Mio Shirai, Keisuke Oki, Haruki Sato, Gallery Cocon, Tokyo

2012 Jabberwocky, Azby Brown, Toshimitsu Nakagawa, Mio Shirai, Live Explosion 2012: MEDIUM, Tokyo cinema club, Tokyo
Text for Nothing, Azby Brown, Toshimitsu Nakagawa, Mio Shirai, Progressive Maria, Waseda Scott Hall, Tokyo

2013 Jabberwocky: Down under museum NO TOKYO, Shinigawa (Hiroyuki Nagashima + Shigeru Matsui), Mio Shirai, Nao Nishihara, Han Wenlin, Ryu Furusawa, The 3rd Tokyo Art Meeting/ Tokyo Sonic Art Weeks, Art and music: Synesthesia experimental theater, The University Art Museum, Tokyo University of Fine Arts, Tokyo

2014 minima (Mio Shirai + Keisuke Oki), performance party, blanclass, Yokohama

2017 Architecture of Improvisation, Saravah Tokyo, Tokyo
Jijogafu, Abracadabra of Drawings, Ichihara Lakeside Museum, Chiba

2020 100v Drawings, Spring Lightning, nap gallery, Tokyo

Awards and Fellowships

1993 Asian Cultural Council Fellowship Grant, New York

1996 Freeman Foundation Fellowship, Vermont

1998 Pola Art Foundation Fellowship, New York

2004 chashama Project Studio Program Residency, New York

2008 UK-Japan 2008 Artist in Residence, Sunderland University, UK

2024 Dark Blue Ribbon Medal

Public Collection

The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Fuchu Art Museum (Tokyo), Chiba City Museum of Art (Chiba) Tamano City (Okayama), Matsudai-cho (Niigata), JR Sapporo Tower (Sapporo), HAT Kobe Wakinohama (Hyogo), Tsukuba Art Center (Ibaraki), Ebisu Garden Place (Tokyo), Faret Tachikawa (Tokyo)