



# 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.



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**Artist Statement**

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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

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**【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

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**■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  
Bolanade, 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, Kunsterhaus 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, Suudwest 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 Artist 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 + Muse 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 Angeles  
Mio Shirai x Sachiyo 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, Shinigiwa (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 Wakinojima (Hyogo), Tsukuba Art Center (Ibaraki), Ebisu Garden Place (Tokyo), Faret Tachikawa (Tokyo)