

3rd BUG Art Award finalists exhibition



2025.9.23 (TUE) – 10.19 (Sun)

Introduction

We are pleased to present a group exhibition featuring the six finalists who have successfully passed the first two rounds of the selection process for the 3rd BUG Art Award. A final round of judging, open to the public, will be held on September 30 (Tues) to select the Grand Prize winner. The artist selected will be given the opportunity to hold a solo exhibition at BUG in approximately one year, and awarded up to 3 million yen to cover creative expenses *(including setup and deinstallation), as well as an additional artist fee.

The BUG Art Award is a program operated by Recruit Holdings Co., Ltd. to support early career artists. BUG fosters the artists' growth throughout the screening process, offering assistance such as feedback from the judging panel, and advice sessions on presenting their work. Building on the legacy of BUG's predecessor, Guardian Garden—which ran the Hitosubo Exhibitions and 1_Wall program over a period of 31 years (the former from 1992 to 2008, the latter from 2009 to 2023).

*Applications for the 4th BUG Art Award will be accepted from January 21 (Wed) to March 4 (Wed), 2026.

Finalists

Ayumi OKITA

Xu Qiu Cheng

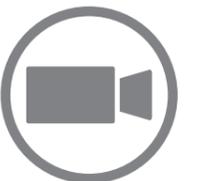
Ayu ZENYOJI

Mizuki TAKAHASHI

Ryohei YOSHIHARA

LIO

Photography and
video are permitted.



DO NOT
touch
the
artworks.



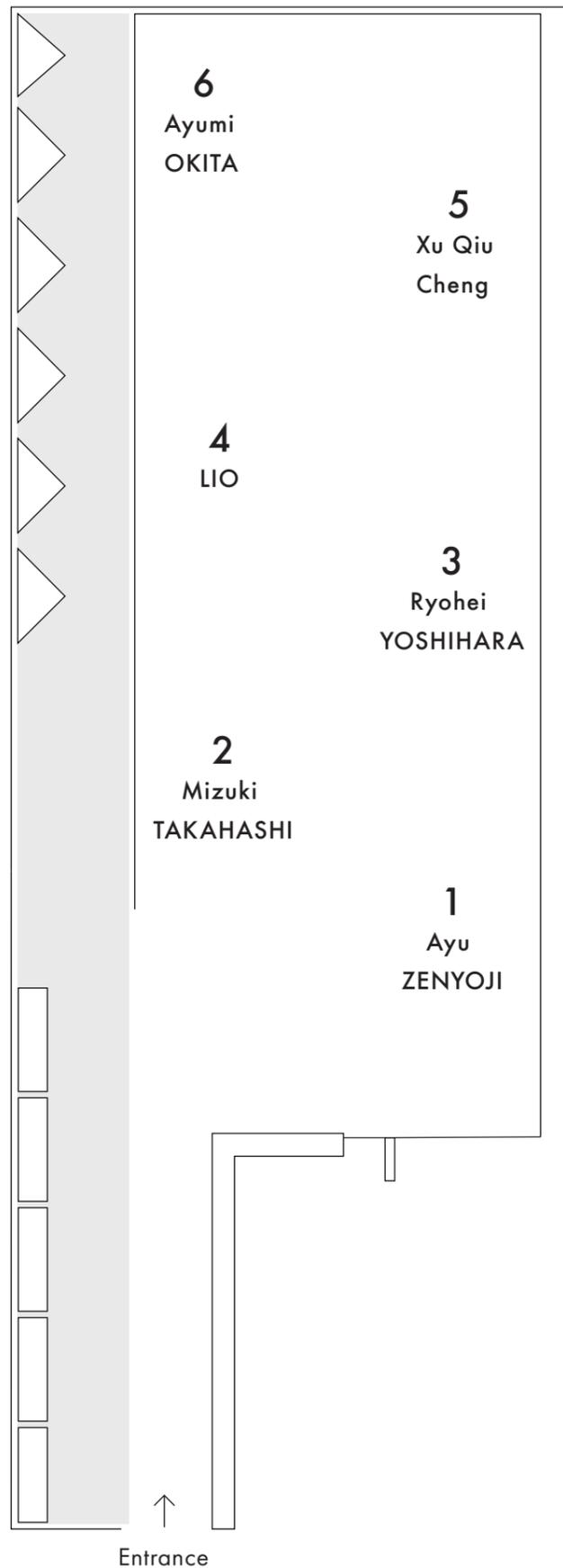
Security
camera in
operation.



List of Works

Notes

Information on works in this list is given in English. In the following order: title / date / material.
All works are collection of the artist.



8 Final Public Screening

During the run of the Finalists Exhibition, the judges will do a final screening to determine the Grand Prize winner.

The finalists will give a public presentation about their exhibited work, as well as their planned solo exhibition should they win. The judges will make their decision based on three factors: 1) work at the Finalists Exhibition; 2) the solo exhibition plan; and 3) the presentation.

9 Grand Prize Winner's Solo Exhibition

The winner of the Grand Prize will be able to hold a solo exhibition at BUG about a year after receiving the prize.

BUG will offer the venue free of charge, provide up to 3 million yen for exhibition expenses, and produce posters and flyers to support promotion of the exhibition.

Judges

Atsuki KIKUCHI (Art Director, Graphic Designer)

Chieko NAKAGAWA (Curator in Tokyo Arts and Space)

Aya MOMOSE (Artist)

Yang02 (Artist)

Yukiko YOKOYAMA (Curator in The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo)

3rd BUG Art Award finalists exhibition

Date: 2025.9.23 (Tue) – 2025.10.19 (Sun)

Organized by BUG

Management: Kanae KATANO (BUG), Kosuke MAEDA (BUG)

Public Relations: Akiko Nose (BUG)

Production: Yuka Hotta (BUG)

Graphic design: Atsuki KIKUCHI

Translation: Keith Spencer, Ben Cagan

Interview, venue shooting, venue video shooting: Masanobu NISHINO

Exhibition plan advisor: Ryohei KAN

Installation advisor: square4

Installation cooperation: Takeru ODAKI (square4), Kota KATO (square4)

Lighting cooperation: HIGURE 17-15 cas

The screening process

BUG Art Award is an award that supports the growth of artists in the screening process.

1 Application

We accept applications through our online form.

Please check the application requirements that are released every fall for the latest application period.

2 First Screening

The judges will screen the (PDF) applications. All judges will be present during the discussion session, and select 20 semi-finalists.

3 Online Consultation Session for the Exhibition Plan/Proposal

We will explain the basics, from the purpose of creating an exhibition plan to specific methods for creating one.

After the lecture, we will also provide an opportunity for you to consult with the instructor individually about the exhibition plan you have polished.

4 Second Screening

The semi-finalists move on to a one-on-one screening with a judge, held in-person at BUG, which will be the venue for the Finalists Exhibition. The judges will then hold a discussion to determine the six finalists. Regardless of their result, the 20 semi-finalists will receive comments from all the judges.

5 Finalists Exhibition Meeting

All finalists will gather at BUG and share their exhibition plans. Upon gaining an understanding of one another's exhibition plan, the group will have a discussion to determine their respective exhibition spaces.

6 Consultation Session for Exhibition and Installation Methods

This is an opportunity to consult with an installer (an expert in installing exhibitions) about how to realize the exhibition and move forward with the installation process, based on your plan for the Finalists Exhibition. The consultations will be held individually, but it is also possible to listen in on the other finalists' consultations. We hope this provides an opportunity to gain different perspectives and pick up on pointers that you may not have heard.

7 Finalists Exhibition (a six-person group exhibition)

BUG holds a group exhibition for the six finalists.

We offer the venue free of charge, provide up to 200,000 JPY to cover production expenses, and produce posters and flyers to support the promotion of the exhibition.

1 : Ayu ZENYOJI

Ayu ZENYOJI was born in 1999. She is currently based in her hometown of Tokyo. The artist travelled to Germany for the Painting/Glass course at Burg Giebichenstein University of Art and Design Halle in 2024, and graduated from Tokyo University of the Arts' Department of Design, Faculty of Fine Arts, in March 2025. Zenyoji examines the gender norms unconsciously reproduced by our visual culture through AI, the media, and advertising, as well as the relationship between consumer society and beauty. She visualizes these structures through a diverse range of techniques and humorous approaches, making use of stickers, machines, video, stained glass, and other materials. Her creative practice focuses on forms of physicality that have been excluded from representation, and the symbolism of anonymized faces.

Select Exhibitions:

2025 Mikke Studio with OTOMODACHI. Mikke Gallery, Tokyo, Japan

2021 OOOOtsuO. Ameyoko Center Building, Tokyo, Japan

2021 Consuming Commodity. Ginza Chuo Gallery, Tokyo, Japan

Select Awards:

2025 Tokyo University of the Arts Graduation Works Exhibition, Heisei Geijutsu Award

2023 Tokyo Geidei ARTFES 2023, Excellence Award

Title: “Generated Pimples”

2025 / media art/installation

In this work, I juxtapose three images of AI-generated women with mechanical pimples. The images of women that circulate in advertising and on social media perpetually reproduce the “ideal face” to drive consumption. In this context, imperfections like acne are made invisible, and the reality of the body is eliminated. By layering issues of homogenization brought about by generative AI over the problem of how women have been represented in everything from the history of art to advertising, I challenge the way in which “appeal” has been constructed through the collusion of visual culture and consumption.

2 : Mizuki TAKAHASHI

Mizuki Takahashi was born in 1999. He became interested in drawing by a vague desire to see things no one had ever seen before. By acting through the mediation of an other, distinct from his controllable self, Takahashi can induce moments of creativity that give rise to something transcending his own imagination. He believes that diluting the creative intervention of the artist on the drawing machine to its furthest possible extent allows for moments when something that no one has ever seen is born.

Select Exhibitions:

2023 Tokyo University of the Arts Graduation Works Exhibition (Master's). Tokyo, Japan

Select Awards:

2022 Watowa Art Award 2022, Daisuke Ohba Award

Title: “Gazing at the Hands of Broken Clocks ”

2025 / media art

What was that cabinet, manufactured over two decades ago and sold off cheap as dead stock, meant to store away? And what about that light, discarded as useless despite the fact it still works, what was it supposed to illuminate? Focusing on the latent historicity of such entities, I hope to be there to witness the moment when something new comes into being. This work is an experiment in the ritual use of a drawing machine as a device to induce invisible forces.

3 : Ryohei YOSHIHARA

Ryohei YOSHIHARA was born in Hiroshima. He studied at Silpakorn Univerity as part of an exchange program, and graduated from the Department of Painting at Tama Art University’ s Faculty of Art and Design. He simultaneously completed Bigakkō’ s Gendai āto no katteguchi [Back door entrance to contemporary art] program. The artist established Artsalon Engawa. He completed the Mural Painting Course at the Department of Painting in Tokyo University of the Arts’ Graduate School of Fine Arts. Recently, Yoshihara has been conducting research on fujizuka (mounds representing Mount Fuji, found around the Tokyo area).

Select Exhibitions:

2025 Absence of Julian. Up & Coming, Tokyo, Japan

2022 Jitsuzuki no mono tachi [Shared ground]. Artsalon Engawa, Tokyo, Japan

2018 Atami Art Week. Atami City Center, Shizuoka, Japan.

Select Awards:

2021 3rd Arts Council Tokyo Startup Grant

Title: “The Great Lakes ”

2025 / media art/illustration/land art

I used Google Maps to search for lakes that resembled each of the Great Lakes, five lakes along the Canada-US border, and will release one GPS-tracked log into each of these unnamed lakes. Five fish tanks, also corresponding to the five lakes, will be arranged at the venue. Visitors will be able to scan QR codes floating in the tanks, and use their phones to check the current location of the logs as they float around the lakes.

4 : LIO

LIO was born in 1996 in Nagano, and raised in Tokyo. They graduated from Tokyo University of the Arts, Department of Inter-Media Art in 2023 after studying abroad in Athens, Greece. As a queer, they create multimedia works that move back and forth between fiction and non-fiction, mainly on the theme of Intersectional identities. The artist is currently residing in Okinawa in order to consider issues concerning colonialism.

Select Exhibitions:

2023 Touch My Mumbings, Hug My Words, Kiss My Singing. Denchu Hirakushi House and Atelier, Tokyo, Japan

2024 Step on the Threshold. The University Art Museum (Tokyo University of the Arts), Tokyo, Japan

2024 SYMPOSITION. Setagaya Public Theatre, Tokyo, Japan

Title: “Purple Black”

2025 / media art/video/performative bodily expression)

Visitors sit in a hammock to view footage in which the artist themself lip-syncs a dialogue that features interwoven references to the BDS movement—which calls for action to stop the genocide in Palestine—experiences of police racial profiling, and issues around misgendering. Drag serves as a form of resistance to the gender binary. The hammocks are provided as a way of creating a setting in which the visitor can listen in a state of suspension to topics around race and gender that are stigmatized in Japanese society.

5 : XU Qiu Cheng

XU Qiu Cheng was born in Henan Province, China, in 1993, and is now based in Tokyo. He earned a degree in Media Arts from Tama Art University’ s Media Arts Course, and went on to complete graduate studies at Tokyo University of the Arts’ Department of Intermedia Art. The artist primarily uses game engines to create videos and games. His practice adopts techniques from games and theater to address issues such as the afterlife, dream, memory, and post-memory.

Select Exhibitions:

2023 Atlas of a Dream Volcano. Datsuijo – (a) place to be naked, Tokyo, Japan

2023The Colossus on AIR. Gallery X by Parco, Tokyo, Japan

2023 The Window of Spaceship ‘In-Between’ (chelfitsch). Locations including Tokyo and Kyoto, Japan; Wuzhen, China; Brussels, Belgium; Seoul, South Korea; and Paris, France.

Select Awards:

2023 Tokyo Gedai ARTFES 2024 Honorable Mention WEBSITE

2023 Asia Digital Art Award FUKUOKA, Moving Images Grand Award/Minister of MEXT Award

2021 Tama Art University Alumni Association Scholarship

Title: “Ripples: The Great Earthquake – 200 Years Later”

2025 /media art/video/performative bodily expression

This work is built around the theme of “post-memory,” and was created using a videogame engine. It opens with the creation myth surrounding the origin of Japan, and culminates in humanity’ s migration into space and evolution into extraterrestrial lifeforms. And then, as the narrative turns back from the end, the now extraterrestrial descendants of humanity seize upon the myths of their ancestors—those who first set foot on this new planet—in an effort to imagine the Earth of old, and use advanced technology to simulate it. It is at the intersection of these two timelines that “I” exist.

6 : Ayumi OKITA

Ayumi OKITA was born in Okayama Prefecture in 1994. They completed the Master’ s program in the Department of Crafts at Kanazawa College of Art in 2024. Based in Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture, the artist’ s painting practice adopts urushi lacquer as a medium. They look for links between humans and non-human beings, and view lacquer, a plant sap that undergoes transformations beyond the expectations of the individual using it, as a mediator connecting people and nature. In recent years, Okita’ s interests have broadened to include the interaction between natural environments and human activity, as well as the folklore and mythology that has come to be intertwined with such relationships.

Select Exhibitions:

2024 Bearing Calendars, Consuming Seeds. Shirasagi, Ishikawa, Japan

2024 Gushō⇔chūshō—kaiga ni oite gushōteki na mono ga chūshōteki na mono ni kawaru shunkan ya keiki, aruiwa sono hantai no genshō [Figurative ⇔ abstract—the moment or opportunity for the transformation from figurative to abstract in painting, or the reverse phenomenon], curated by Hiroki Yamamoto. ASTER Curator Museum, Ishikawa, Japan

2024 Blessings Flow Through the Wounds. Kuma Gallery, Tokyo, Japan

Select Awards:

2020 Sato International Cultural Scholarship Foundation 30th Term Selection

2018 Kuma Foundation 2nd Term Selection

2017 38th Takifuji International Art Award Excellence Prize

Title: “On the Harvest”

2024 / painting/installation

Are the forests actually thriving? People talk about global warming and deforestation, but the deterioration of neglected satoyama (managed woodland) is also a problem in many areas. Once, people connected with nature through kami (deities), performed agricultural rituals to celebrate harvests, and imagined megami (female deities) inhabiting the mountains. But now our connection to the forests is becoming ever fainter. This work engages in a dialogue with urushi lacquer—a material that defies human control—during the act of painting, in a search for new ways of connecting with nature in our present age.