

Tokyo International Gallery

Solo Exhibition

ANIMATE

Exhibition Period : 2026. 11. 7. Sat. – 12. 26. Sat.

Opening Reception : 2026. 11. 7. Sat. 16:00 – 19:00



2026
11 / 7
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12 / 26

Asuka Watanabe Solo Exhibition

ANIMATE

Animate means "to bring something to life" or
"to make something lively, active, or full of energy."

It can refer not only to give a life or movement,
but also to bring vitality, spirit, or a sense of liveliness
to a place, idea, object, or community.

Tokyo International Gallery presents *ANIMATE*, a solo exhibition by Asuka Watanabe

Tokyo International Gallery (Shinagawa–Tennoz, Tokyo) is pleased to announce, *ANIMATE*, a solo exhibition by Asuka Watanabe, on view from Saturday, November 7 to Saturday, December 26, 2026.

Watanabe has worked across a range of fields, including art, design, and art direction. She is particularly known for creating the main visual for FUJI ROCK FESTIVAL, a role she has held since 2017. Although her practice is cross-disciplinary, her distinctive style is immediately recognizable in the way she depicts plants, animals, and landscapes through bold, flat shapes and vivid colors.

The title of this exhibition, *ANIMATE*, means to breathe life or spirit into something and to set it in motion. The word can also be understood as an underlying theme for Watanabe’s practice, which has consistently explored natural motifs through vivid colors and bold shapes. Historically, an artist’s ability to create compelling works from inert materials has often been likened to the divine act of breathing life into nature. Watanabe, however, is interested in “animate” as the moment when something begins to move and the sense of life emerges there. In this exhibition, the word therefore refers not to beings that give life one-directionally, but to the multi-directional relationships among the artist, the works, and the viewers.

In the works presented here, Watanabe arranges multiple color fields, shapes, and motifs within a single picture plane, composing them as one overall visual experience. The images intermingle, and their identities and boundaries are sometimes ambiguous. Wavy lines may evoke mountain ridgelines, the flow of water or air, or decorative patterns. The term “animism,” which shares its etymological root with “animate,” describes the belief that spirits inhabit everything from humans, animals, and objects to natural phenomena. In this sense, Watanabe’s works, where the organic and inorganic, the representational and abstract intermingle, may evoke the very sense of anima —spirit and life—itself.

We invite you to experience Watanabe’s dynamic world of work, where the sense of life arises from the composition of color and shape, and it begins to open toward the viewers.

= Exhibition Statement =

Plants grow. Light shifts. Wind passes through. Whether visible or invisible, something is constantly moving and changing around us.

Tracing the word ANIMATE back to its origin brings us to the Latin word *anima*, meaning breath, life, and spirit. To breathe into something, to set it in motion, and to give it life—these were once contained within a single word.

I am interested in creating movement and rhythm within a still picture through the arrangement, overlap, and repetition of color and shape. Depending on where one looks, from what distance, and on how each viewer perceives them, the shapes may appear to move or seem to become something else.

Starting from things I see around me, such as plants, birds, stars, light, and landscapes, and from images that remain in my memory, I translate these impressions into color and shape. Moving back and forth between the representational and the abstract, I try to generate time and movement within a still picture plane.

The central works in this exhibition adopt a poster-like composition. Whereas posters are traditionally meant to convey information or a message, here I have tried to create paintings in which color and shape themselves appeal to the viewer directly, instead of presenting any specific meaning.

For me, the act of making is about giving shape to the sensations I receive from the world and releasing them outward. In doing so, the work leaves my hands and comes to connect with the memories and sensations of each person who views it.

ANIMATE is an exhibition that explores the movement and sense of life that arise within still paintings.



ARTIST PROFILE

Asuka Watanabe

She was born in Nagano Prefecture and is an artist and art director based in Tokyo. She observes the natural rhythms around her, such as the growth of plants and the shifting of sky, light, and landscape, and expresses them through geometric forms and vivid colors. With a background in graphic design, she creates work that extends beyond two-dimensional formats, including paintings, murals, installations, and site-specific works. In addition to creating the main visuals for FUJI ROCK FESTIVAL since 2017, she produces works across a wide range of fields, including the music, architecture, hospitality, and public space sectors.



<BIOGRAPHY>

1985	Born in Nagano Prefecture
2008	Graduated from Department of Design, Faculty of Art and Communication Evening Division at Tama Art University
2008–2010	Hakuhodo Product's Inc.
2010	Became independent; began working as a freelance designer
2013–2015	Studied in Los Angeles
2017–present	Main Visual Designer, FUJI ROCK FESTIVAL
2018–2022	Art & Graphics Lead, WeWork Japan
2024–present	Involved in direction and curation at K ART GALLERY, Omotesando, Tokyo

<EXHIBITIONS>

[Solo Exhibitions]

2022	<i>ROOM</i> (No., Tokyo)
2022	<i>SAUNA NATURE FINLAND</i> (Kanda PORT, Tokyo)
2024	<i>Bloom</i> (K ART GALLERY, Tokyo)
2025	<i>Shapes of Rhythm</i> (K ART GALLERY, Tokyo)

[Group Exhibitions]

2020	<i>PARAPARADISE</i> (VOID, Tokyo)
2020	<i>No Planet No Fun, The Exhibition</i> (WeWork Iceberg, Tokyo)
2022	<i>(V)ALCHEMY LAB</i> (UNKNOWN HARAJUKU, Tokyo)

- 2023 *"Be It" curated by YOSHIROTTEN by GQ HYPE in collaboration with Johnnie Walker Blue Label*
(Spiral Hall, Tokyo)
- 2024 *Dai Neon Exhibition -FIND NEW WAVE-* (Tower Gallery, Tokyo)
- 2024 *INTERACTION* (Letterbox, Vancouver)
- 2026 *1620×1120×35×1* (K ART GALLERY, Tokyo)

<OTHERS>

- 2016 A' Design Award & Competition (Advertising, Marketing and Communication Design Category) Golden
A' Design Award: Graphic Design and Illustration for "GARAGARA Summer Festival"
- 2022 Artist-in-residence at Arteles Creative Center (Finland)



■ Exhibition Overview

- Title : ANIMATE
- Artist : Asuka Watanabe
- Venue : Tokyo International Gallery
- Address : TERRADA ART COMPLEX II 2F, 1-32-8 Higashi-Shinagawa, Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo
- Dates : Saturday, November 7 – Saturday, December 26, 2026
- Hours : 10:00 – 19:00
- Closed : Sundays, Mondays, and Holidays (Tuesdays by appointment)

■ Opening Reception

- Date : Saturday, November 7, 2026, 16:00 – 19:00 (Free/ No reservation)
- Venue : Tokyo International Gallery

【 Contact 】

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