

March 17, 2021

Art Platform Japan Brings the Wealth of Contemporary Japanese Art to the World

- Launched March 15, [Art Platform Japan](https://artplatform.go.jp) (URL: <https://artplatform.go.jp>) makes information on contemporary Japanese art available globally in English, for the first time creating a unified, bilingual platform to help global audiences learn more about artists in Japan and their works.
- Visitors can browse a vast database of collections from museums across Japan. Users will also be able to access translations of important texts on contemporary art.
- [Art Platform Japan](https://artplatform.go.jp) will also help experts to network, conduct research, and collaborate.

Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs (Bunka-cho) has launched Art Platform Japan (beta), a new online resource for disseminating information on contemporary Japanese art domestically and internationally. As much of this information was previously unavailable in English, the website opens entirely new opportunities for global audiences to learn more about contemporary art from Japan. Art Platform Japan is the brainchild of the Bunka-cho Art Platform Japan Project, which started in May 2018 to support the sustainable development of Japan's contemporary art, gather a wide range of counsel from professionals in the field, and further the international reputation of Japanese artists and artists working in Japan.

Bilingual in English and Japanese, the resource is open to researchers, curators, artists, students, art professionals, and enthusiasts in Japan and overseas, who can access information in three ways:

① Japanese Museum Collections Search (SHŪZŌ)

SHŪZŌ is a massive and growing database built to share and access information on art collections stored in museums throughout Japan. Created with the cooperation of registered museums and museum-equivalent facilities nationwide, as of March 15 it covered 85 museums, about 70,000 items, and 1,243 artists. By March 2023, the database will be expanded to cover more than 200 museums and 100,000 items, becoming a full-scale system that enables researchers globally and domestically to gather information on specific artworks and their locations in Japan.

② Texts

Previously untranslated texts (books, critiques, academic papers, catalog contributions, etc.) focused on high-demand post-1945 era art will be made available in English in PDF format. The purpose is to stimulate research that will raise the international recognition of contemporary Japanese art. By March 2023, about 100 writings will have been selected for translation, to be published online as they are completed. Resources, such as style guides related to highly specialized art translation, will also be released to facilitate future translations.

③ Programs

Alongside workshops, symposiums, and webinars aimed at expanding the international network of experts, there will be a continually published archive of articles written on the support given to artists who have gained opportunities to participate in noteworthy international exhibitions. By strengthening connections with key sources of information and people in Japan and overseas, Art Platform Japan will seek to create a range of opportunities for exchanging ideas, joint research, and international exhibitions.

In addition, Art Platform Japan will continually publish basic research information such as Contemporary Japanese Art Exhibitions Research and Survey on Japanese Art Galleries from 1945.

Media contacts

Anders Lenart, Kreab Japan (PR Agency), +81 (0)70 4272 0749 alenart@kreab.com
Chung Hyon-Suk, Kreab Japan (PR Agency), +81 (0)80 4139 4268 hchung@kreab.com
Bunka-cho Art Platform Japan, press@bunka-artplatform.jp

Supplementary Information

□ Background to the Launch of Art Platform Japan

The Bunka-cho Art Platform Japan Project aims to promote the sustainable development of contemporary art in Japan by gathering opinions from a wide range of people in the field, and promoting initiatives to enhance the international reputation of Japanese artists and artists working in Japan, and their works. The Steering Committee of the Contemporary Art Committee Japan (chaired by Kataoka Mami, Director of the Mori Art Museum) will work to build an international network of experts to promote practical research. The network will also serve to translate important texts on contemporary art in Japan, build a database of information on artworks across museums in Japan, and disseminate this information both domestically and internationally through websites and other means, as well as to encourage the international activities of artists in Japan, including younger generations of artists.

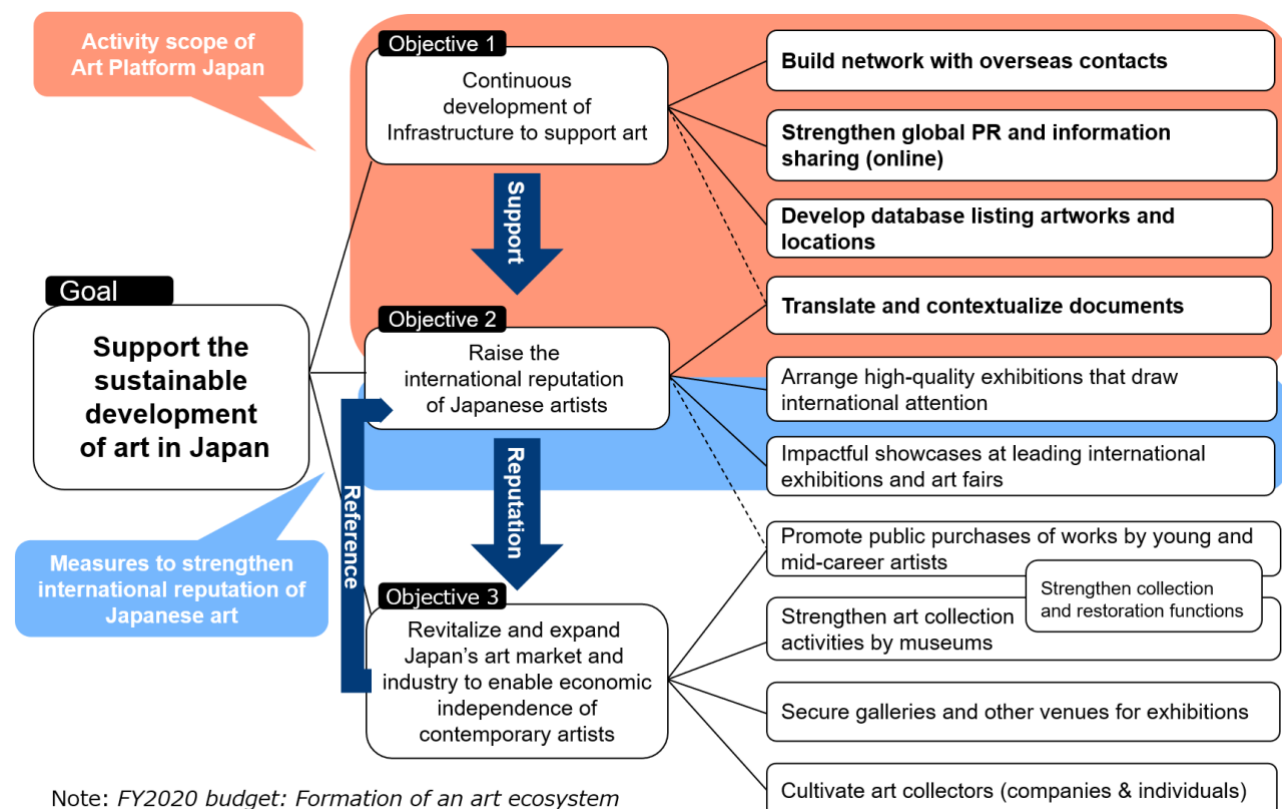
https://www.bunka.go.jp/seisaku/bunka_gyosei/artplatform/index.html

“Japan has produced outstanding artists who are highly regarded internationally. In the post-1945 era period in particular, Japan produced the largest number of artists and artworks after Europe and the United States. However, the valuation and evaluation of contemporary Japanese art have long been carried out in the form of reimports from Europe and the United States. In Japan, artists, museums, researchers, curators, gallerists, collectors, and other related parties have all been working individually, but there has been no central organization to fully grasp the nature of all activities, disseminate information, and provide strategic support. For that reason, there are currently challenges to overcome for instance related to funding and personnel development.”

(Excerpted and summarized from "Summary of Issues" on overseas promotion of contemporary art, October 2014)

https://www.bunka.go.jp/seisaku/bunkashingikai/kondankaito/gendaibijutsu_kaigaihasshin/pdf/kentokai_ronri.pdf

Against this backdrop, the Bunka-cho Art Platform Japan Project was launched in May 2018. The project places emphasis on reflecting the opinions of people involved in contemporary art from various perspectives. By working through and overcoming the issues and complex activities listed below, the project aims to play a key role and function in the formation of an art ecosystem to contribute to the improvement of the reputation of contemporary Japanese art around the world.



□ **Commentary from members of the Contemporary Art Committee Japan regarding the launch of Art Platform Japan**

Kataoka Mami (Director, Mori Art Museum/Chair)

Contemporary art has become a common global language, and museum programming, studies, and art creation transcend national and regional borders. There is a call for awareness of how domestic art activities are connected to the world and to history. Since 2018, the Contemporary Art Committee Japan has engaged in establishing a bilingual database of works stored and exhibited in domestic museums, translating key documents, and hosting workshops. This will help establish professional networks to support the sustainable development and increased international reputation of Japan's contemporary art. The launch of the Art Platform Japan website to visualize these accomplishments is our first step in this direction. I sincerely hope that, along with its continued upkeep, the website will allow access to valuable information without physical travel and will become an important foundation in maintaining contemporary Japanese art's connection to this vast world and its long history.

Ohmukai Ikki (Associate Professor, Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, The University of Tokyo/Collection Information Subcommittee)

The key to developing a cross-organizational database is establishing an appropriate data management structure and assuring quality. For the Japanese Museum Collections Search, data created through the continuous efforts of the participating museums were organized manually by each of the specialists for comprehensive processing. This has enabled a simplified system structure and short-term service delivery, and also facilitated cost estimations for data expansions in the mid- to long-term. I also found that it greatly sped up the searches. With the new platform providing an environment for browsing a wide range of information on museum artworks in multiple ways, I expect to see new initiatives based on this website.

Kajiya Kenji (Professor, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, The University of Tokyo/Committee)

Internationalization is steadily increasing opportunities to create, exhibit, and study contemporary art. Japan's contemporary art, along with various historical works, is beginning to garner attention as a subject of study and debate within this global context. Being able to share, in English, a database of Japan's museum works, key documents written originally in Japanese, and basic information on Japan's contemporary art, will invite discussions from overseas experts and revitalize the field. By continually engaging in such endeavors, I hope that contemporary Japanese art will, along with its history and discourse, be assessed as part of global contemporary art.