

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Izumi Kato

Izumi Kato animates paintings, sculptures and installations with figures that inhabit a liminal space between the physical and spiritual realms.

Kato lives and works between Tokyo and Hong Kong. He was born in 1969 in the Shimane prefecture of Japan, a sparsely populated province bordered by mountain and sea which houses Izumo Ōyashiro, one of the oldest and most significant shrines in Shintoism.

Describing painting as the root of his practice, with bold clashing colours the artist depicts children with unusual faces, embryos with fully developed limbs and figures with bulbous heads attached to slim, graceful bodies. Working intuitively, Kato applies pigment to surfaces directly with his hands. Meanwhile, his sculptural work incorporates diverse materials, such as textiles, wood, and stone, which are carved, stitched, and collaged into artworks. He sees his sculptural practice as a way to deepen and challenge his understanding of what constitutes a painting.

The creatures in Kato's work tower over viewers or hide discreetly in corners of rooms. Speaking of the universality of the beings that he animates through his practice, Kato says, "They are no one and nowhere"; rather the forms are expressions of the energy and very essence of consciousness.

Kato graduated from the Painting Department at Musashino University in Tokyo, Japan in 1992.

The first institutional exhibition of Kato's work in the UK is on view at Charleston, Friele until November 2025. Kato had a two-person exhibition, 'Speaking in Silence', with Bosco Sodi at Kyoto's historic Ryosokuin Zen Temple, Japan, in November 2024. The artist's first UK solo exhibition took place at Stephen Friedman Gallery, London in 2022. Other recent solo exhibitions include 'Parasitic Plastic Models', Watari Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan (2022); 'Stand By You', SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, Georgia, USA (2021); Red Brick Art Museum, Beijing, China (2020); 'LIKE A ROLLING SNOWBALL', Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo and Hara Museum ARC, Gunma, Japan (2019) and Fundación Casa Wabi, Puerto Escondido, Mexico (2019).

Notable group exhibitions include: 'Handle With Care', Colección SOLO, Madrid, Spain (2024); 'Being in the World', Long Museum, Shanghai, China (2022); 'Assembly 1: Unstored', Assembly, New York, USA (2022); Pacific Century: Hawaii Triennial, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA (2022); 'Just Looking, Still Looking, Always Looking', Aranya Art Center, Qinhuangdao, China (2021); 'Garden of Life: Eight Contemporary Artists Venture into Nature', Tokyo, Metropolitan Teien Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan (2020); 'Unconstrained Textiles: Stitching Methods, Crossing Ideas', Centre for Heritage, Arts and Textile, Hong Kong, China (2020) and 'Japanorama. A new vision on art since 1970', Centre Pompidou-Metz, Metz, France (2017). In 2007, Kato was invited to take part in 'Think with the Senses – Feel with the Mind: Art in the Present Tense' in the Italian Pavilion at the 52nd Venice Biennale, curated by Robert Storr.

Public collections include: Balanz Collection, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Contemporary Art Museum Kumamoto, Kumamoto, Japan; Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan; Japigozzi Collection, Geneva, Switzerland; K11, Hong Kong, China; Long Museum, Shanghai, China; Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan; The National Museum of Art, Osaka, Japan; The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan; Red Brick Art Museum, Beijing, China; Shizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art, Shizuoka, Japan; Taguchi Art Collection, Tokyo, Japan; Takahashi Ryutaro Collection, Tokyo, Japan; Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Aichi, Japan; Zhiguan Museum of Fine Art, Beijing, China and 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Ishikawa, Japan.