

Shiki & Kū

Immersive Audio-Visual Installation



STUDIO
PROGRAMSOUNDS

Yota Kobayashi

Ryo Kanda

Quartetto Maurice

Mark Takeshi McGregor

Aiko Hatanaka

Rurihiko Hara

September 13—28, 2025

Artist Talk: Sept 13 | 2-4 pm

Opening Reception: Sept 13 | 5-8 pm

Lecture-Demo: Sept 14 | 11 am - 2 pm



Media Arts Centre

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Vancouver-based soundscape artist **Yota Kobayashi** transforms VIVO Media Arts Centre with ***Shiki & Kū***, an immersive audio-visual installation featuring two thematically paired works: ***Shinshiki*** and ***Kūsou***. The exhibition brings together international artists and collaborators to explore the dynamic tension between *form* and *emptiness*.

Shiki & Kū

The exhibition presents two paired works that together convey the theme: “*Shiki is Kū, and Kū is Shiki*”—that is, “*Form is emptiness, emptiness is form*”—a fundamental concept in Eastern philosophy. *Kūsou* represents “Form is emptiness,” while *Shinshiki* expresses “Emptiness is form,” complementing each other to fully articulate the theme. “Form” refers to all perceivable realities, both physical and conceptual, that we experience through our senses and cognition. “Emptiness” suggests that these realities are impermanent and fluid, arising only through individual perception and imagination, lacking independent, self-contained existence. Therefore, all realities arising from the perceptions and imaginations of each individual in the world are equally valid and essential for the formation of the harmonious universe.

***Shinshiki*, 2025, 26:47**

Shinshiki / 神色 (Forms of Divinities) is an immersive audio-visual installation with multichannel video projection and spatialized sound. The work draws on the traditional Japanese concept of Ma—a space believed to be where *kami* (divinities) descend.

In the worldview of the ancient Japanese, an enclosed space was seen as a vacant, sacred zone. Even tangible objects, though appearing solid, were believed to contain an inner emptiness—a sacred void into which *kami* (divinities) could descend, filling the space with spiritual force. The acts of preparing such a space, known as Ma, and waiting for *kami* to manifest deeply shaped Japanese perceptions of space and time, later influencing their artistic expression. The Japanese also believed in yaoyorozu-no-kami (“eight million divinities”), where “eight million” symbolizes infinity—the idea that *kami* could descend into all things in nature and become objects of worship: trees, fire, waterfalls, rocks, the sun, mountains, and more. Even today, there are approximately 80,000 shrines throughout the Japanese archipelago, and many of them conduct matsuri (seasonal ceremonies and rituals) to honor diverse, local *kami*.

In *Shinshiki*, the primary sound sources are Western string instruments (violin, viola, cello), while the visual elements are symbolic objects, actions, and phenomena drawn from ancient Japanese animistic contexts that express awe, reverence, and gratitude toward *kami*. Through real-time computer graphics, the visual sources appear as dynamic 3D objects and events on the screen and are rendered spatially throughout the exhibit space, creating a continuously transforming scenery. Similarly, the soundscape consists of both acoustic and electronically transformed sounds of the string instruments.

The work does not depict concrete forms of divinities. Instead, the transforming scenery presents a series of five spaces (*Ma*) woven into the fabric of the cosmos, each rooted in diverse animistic contexts, onto which the audience can freely embody unique animistic divinities in mind—and together, these unseen presences collectively fill the exhibition space in harmonious coexistence. In the ancient Japanese worldview, there is no absolute *kami* to which all others are subordinate; rather, all *kami* coexist and evolve harmoniously, permeating the entire cosmos. The artists hope this vision of harmonious coexistence will resonate with audiences, inviting reflection on the potential for unity amidst the divisions that shape our world.

***Kūsou*, 2022, 24:24**

Kūsou / 空相 is an audio-visual installation with multichannel video projection and sound spatialization. The primary visual and sound sources are respectively 160 pieces of Japanese calligraphy and 665 phrases of Western flute. While Japanese calligraphy has historically functioned as a means of communicating, it is equally considered a visual art form that can be appreciated without comprehension of Japanese writing or language. Through real-time computer graphics, the pieces of calligraphy are represented as dynamic 3D objects on the screen and rendered spatially in the exhibit space as a continuously transforming visual scenery. Similarly, the audible scenery consists of acoustic and electronically transformed flute sounds.

Kanji characters communicate beyond the boundaries of language: they are often pictographic and, when executed as expressively, the varied shapes, lines, tones, and textures offer a very wide array of subjective interpretations to the viewer. This very much ties into the meaning of the title of this project: *Kūsou*, one of the fundamental concepts of Zen Buddhism meaning “the state of emptiness”—which is different from a state of “nothingness.” It is the artists’ hope that the projected and transformed calligraphy, alongside the acoustic and electronically processed sounds of the flute, will create abstract scenery as a sort of objective “state of emptiness” onto which the audience can embody their own unique realities.

Accordingly, the artwork comprises three scenes which are respectively titled: (1) Lines of Harmony, (2) Breath of Standalones, and (3) Leaves of Realities. The constituents of the visible scenery are 12 pairs of characters which represent opposite meanings to each other. Each character signifies a notion that people generally consider existent, but the artwork represents them all as *Kū* (emptiness) which becomes existence as the form is discerned. What higher-level notion uniquely emerges in the mind of the audience when two or more juxtaposed forms are discerned together? This is the question that the artists would like to see answered in the audience’s experience.

Project website: **formscape.art**

Shiki & Kū is co-presented by **VIVO Media Arts Centre** and **Formscape Arts**, in partnership with **Vancouver New Music** and **IM4 Media Lab**, with the support of the **Canada Council for the Arts**, **UBC School of Music**, **UBC ICICS**, and **Epson**, and developed with the participation of the **British Columbia Arts Council**, **Creative BC** and the **Province of BC**.



Yota Kobayashi - Soundscape Art, Conception & Direction

Ryo Kanda - Visual Art

Quartetto Maurice - Strings Performance

Mark McGregor - Flute Performance

Aiko Hatanaka - Japanese Calligraphy

Rurihiko Hara - Historical Research

Yota Kobayashi (Vancouver)

Yota Kobayashi is a soundscape artist specializing in the creation of immersive and interactive soundscapes for audio-visual installations through an integrated practice of sound production, composition, and software development. He holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in composition from the University of British Columbia. His artistic research and creative work on human-computer interaction for experiential artwork have been funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), UBC ICICS, the Canada Council for the Arts, Creative BC, the British Columbia Arts Council, and the National Association of Japanese Canadians. His works have been presented internationally at festivals, conferences, and exhibitions. Notable awards include First Prize at Musica Nova (Czech Republic) and First Prize at the Concours Internazionale Luigi Russolo (Italy).

Ryo Kanda (Tokyo, Japan)

Ryo Kanda (a.k.a. Kezzardrix) is a computer graphics and visual artist based in Tokyo, Japan, specializing in generative visual expression through programming. His work spans live visual performances, music videos, theatre productions, media installations, digital signage, and software development, both in Japan and internationally. He is also active as a member of the black metal unit VMO and HEPIXELS, a visual art project with Satoru Higa. Since 2016, Kanda has been part of INT, the creative division of HIP LAND MUSIC. His accolades include the Award of Distinction at Ars Electronica 2016.

Aiko Hatanaka (Tokyo, Japan)

Aiko Hatanaka (a.k.a. Sumifutten) is a Tokyo-based Japanese calligrapher whose practice merges traditional calligraphy with contemporary design. She began studying calligraphy at the age of five and gradually developed a focus on integrating calligraphy with typography and visual design. Alongside her work as a stylist and advertising designer, she deepened her calligraphic practice, eventually establishing herself as an independent calligraphy artist and designer. She works under the name "Sumifutten," meaning "the boiling point of sumi ink," reflecting her pursuit of passionate, expressive design. Her work has been featured in numerous exhibitions and interdisciplinary projects, including the stage backdrop for the theatre production Summer of the Kishi Family (2011) and the installation Words around 'FLY' at Royal Park Hotel The Haneda, located within Haneda International Airport (2014).

Mark Takeshi McGregor

Mark Takeshi McGregor is a flutist, chamber musician, and improviser based in Vancouver, on the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Peoples. Known for his "mind-blowing" performances and "huge physical energy" (Times Colonist), he is principal flutist with Aventa Ensemble, Sound of Dragon, and Vancouver Intercultural Orchestra, and has performed across five continents. As a soloist and ensemble musician, McGregor has appeared with groups such as the Victoria Symphony, Little Giant Chinese Chamber Orchestra (Taiwan), and Aventa Ensemble. His collaborations include leading composers like Michael Finnissy, Heiner Goebbels, Philippe Leroux, Nicole Lizée, and Rolf Wallin. He is deeply committed to expanding the Canadian flute repertoire, a dedication recognized with the Friends of Canadian Music Award (2021). A prolific recording artist, McGregor's work appears on Centrediscs and Redshift Records. His album Lutalica, featuring solo flute works by Pacific Rim composers, earned him the 2020 Western Canadian Music Award for Classical Artist/Ensemble of the Year. Since 2021, he has served as Artistic Director of the Queer Arts Festival + SUM gallery, a major platform for 2SLGBTQIA+ artists in Canada.

Quartetto Maurice

Quartetto Maurice — Georgia Privitera (violin), Laura Bertolino (violin), Francesco Vernerio (viola), and Aline Privitera (cello) — is an Italian string quartet known for its bold exploration of contemporary music and integration of electronics. Since its formation in 2002, the Quartet has placed 20th and 21st-century music at the core of its repertoire, collaborating with leading composers including Márta and György Kurtág, Helmut Lachenmann, Beat Furrer, and Chaya Czernowin. Their 4+1 Project, which treats electronics as a fifth ensemble member, reflects their commitment to redefining chamber music for today's soundscape. Their performances have appeared at major festivals including the Venice Biennale, November Music (Netherlands), Tzllil Meudcan (Israel), and the New Music Festival (Canada). The Quartet's recordings include works by Fausto Romitelli, Silvia Borzelli, and Luigi Nono, and their work has been recognized with the Franco Abbiati Italian Music Critics Award and the Kranichsteiner Stipendium Preis (Darmstadt).

Rurihiko Hara

Rurihiko Hara is Associate Professor at Shizuoka University's Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and School of Regional Development. He is also a board member of the general incorporated association hO. His research focuses on Japanese gardens, Noh, and Kyogen. Hara completed his doctorate at the University of Tokyo's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in 2020. His recent publications include Suhama-ron (On Suhama, Sakuhin-sha, 2023) and Nihon Teien o Meguru: Dezitaru Akaibu no Kanōsei (Walking Around Japanese Gardens: The Potential of Digital Archives, Hayakawa Shobō, 2023). In 2024, he received both the 74th Minister of Education, Culture, Sports and Technology's Art Encouragement Prize for New Artists and the 15th Association for Studies of Culture and Representation Encouragement Prize for Suhama-ron. His work also extends to performance, having served as dramaturge for Life-Well, a Noh collaboration by Ryuichi Sakamoto, Mansai Nomura, and Shiro Takatani (2013), as well as the ongoing Okina Project (2020–).