

8th Yokohama Triennale Announcement of the Theme and Two Additional Venues

Wild Grass: Our Lives at Yokohama Museum of Art, Former Daiichi Bank Yokohama Branch, and BankART KAIKO

The Organizing Committee for Yokohama Triennale (Kondo Seiichi, Chairperson / President, Yokohama Arts Foundation) is pleased to announce the theme and two new venues for the 8th Yokohama Triennale (March 15 – June 9, 2024 / Artistic Directors: Liu Ding & Carol Yinghua Lu).

■Theme: “Wild Grass: Our Lives”

The theme of the 8th Yokohama Triennale is “Wild Grass: Our Lives,” taken from the Chinese writer Lu Xun’s (1881–1936) anthology Wild Grass, published in 1927. Lu Xun penned the 23 essays compiled in this book from 1924 to 1926, during the turbulent period in Chinese history as well as his personal life, and through it found a thin thread of hope in times of despair. “Wild Grass” is a metaphor celebrating our lives, which are fragile and defenseless but strong and resilient at the same time. It is a metaphor for our lives fraught with many challenges, such as the pandemic, climate change, war in Ukraine, economic disparities, as well as rampant fake news and questions on moral responsibilities on digital platforms.

Starting from the period of Lu Xun, the exhibition traces several historical moments, such as the end of the Cold War, that have consequently shaped the oppressive conditions we face today. By juxtaposing works by contemporary artists from different parts of the world with historical artworks, we can reflect on our way of life and search for hope in our future.

With a goal to be one of the best beginner’s guides to contemporary art, the 8th edition of Yokohama Triennale will strive to engage the public in the spirit of “Wild Grass.”

■Historical Sites as Venues: “Former Daiichi Bank Yokohama Branch,” “BankART KAIKO,” Combined with the Yokohama Museum of Art

“Wild Grass: Our Lives” will be held at the Yokohama Museum of Art which opened in 1989, and two historical buildings: Former Daiichi Bank Yokohama Branch, completed in 1929; and Former Yokohama Raw Silk Inspection Bureau Warehouse (now KITANAKA BRICK & WHITE), completed in 1926, which houses the alternative art space BankART KAIKO. While the Yokohama Museum of Art opened in the year that marked the end of the Cold War, the two historical buildings were built in the same period as Lu Xun’s Wild Grass, published in 1927. The 8th Yokohama Triennale will use the historical legacies of the city as a stage to explore contemporary issues.

In addition to the exhibition, a variety of partnership programs will be held in collaboration with various facilities located in the area covering Yokohama Station to Motomachi/China Town and the Yamate district, so that the visitors could experience cutting-edge art with the hidden gems of the city.

■Engaging the Citizens in the Spirit of “Wild Grass”

The typography developed by the designer Okazaki Mariko incorporates letters handwritten by 200 citizens and students in Yokohama. It represents the power of individuals to survive and override existing systems.



8th Yokohama Triennale: Venues

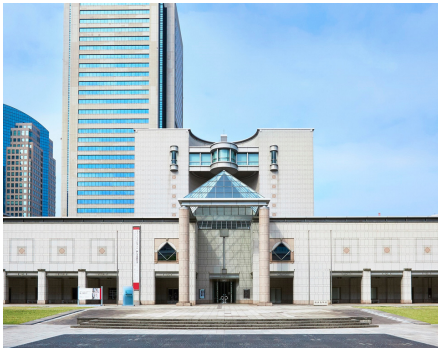


Photo: KASAGI Yasuyuki

Yokohama Museum of Art

Designed by Tange Kenzo, one of Japan's leading postwar architects, the Yokohama Museum of Art opened in 1989 as the first facility in the central district of Minato Mirai 21, which is a waterfront area facing the port. The museum has a collection of approx. 13,000 modern and contemporary artworks since the opening of the port in 1859. It has organized a wide variety of exhibitions and has also provided hands-on workshops and art appreciation programs for both children and adults. The library has a collection of Japanese and international art resources. The museum will reopen in March 2024 with the 8th Yokohama Triennale, after nearly three years of major renovation.



Former Daiichi Bank Yokohama Branch

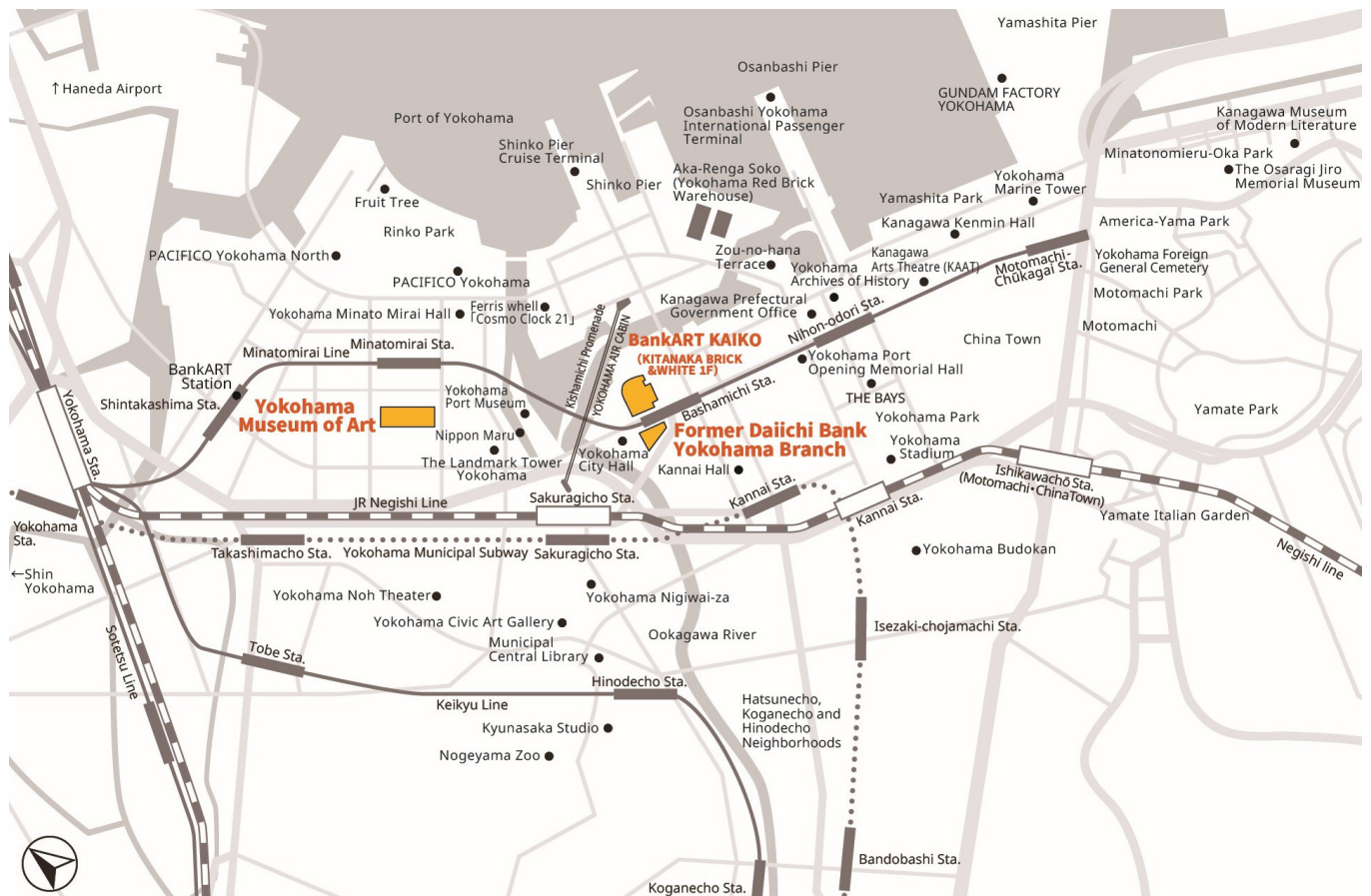
The former Daiichi Bank Yokohama Branch is the fourth building of the bank and was built in 1929 after the Great Kanto Earthquake (1923), by Nishimura Yoshitoki, an architect known for his bank building designs. At the time of construction, the building was located near the entrance to Bashamichi Street. It moved 170 meters from its original location and was restored in 2003. From 2004, it has become a space for activities related to "Creative City of Culture and the Arts." This building is a valuable remnant of that era before World War II when the area was the financial center of Yokohama.



Photo: OHNO Ryusuke

BankART KAIKO

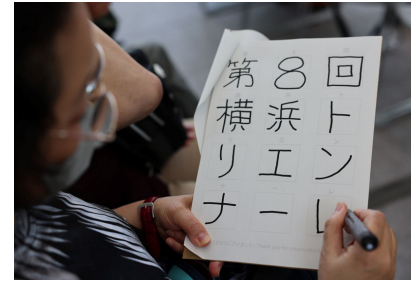
The historical buildings that house BankART KAIKO are part of the Former Yokohama Raw Silk Inspection Bureau Warehouses B and C which were built in 1926 after the Great Kanto Earthquake (1923). Silk was an important export item for Japan's modernization after the port opened for foreign trade in 1859. The Kitanaka area developed along with raw silk warehouses and inspection facilities. In 2020, NPO BankART1929, the leading art organization following the Creative City policy in Yokohama opened an alternative space for contemporary art. The current buildings preserve the landscape of the time when Yokohama prospered through silk trade.



8th Yokohama Triennale: Design

The Organizing Committee for Yokohama Triennale has selected Okazaki Mariko as the designer for the 8th Yokohama Triennale.

Okazaki collected handwritten letters by approximately 200 citizens and students in Yokohama to be incorporated into developing a new set of typography.



Design Concept

[Typography]

When I was looking for conceptual clues to express the spirit of “Wild Grass” in the logo and typography, I started by studying the history of letterforms in my own way.

In the process, I found two parallel streams: standardized letterforms provided by a centralized entity, and spontaneous letterforms created with physical actions as if they were extension of the throat and arms, that deviated from such norms (or transcended them).

Normative or the deviant?

“Wild Grass” as “a symbol of a life force that is unregulated, irrepressible, defiant, self-motivated, and prepared to fight alone at all times” is clearly the latter.

From this point of view, I came up with the idea to create a logo in which the latter type of letterforms would clash with and surpass those of the former.

As the result, I created the motion and still logo, in which the typefaces produced as global standards by a major company in a large country is gradually broken down and transformed into a lively appearance through the variable mixing of handwritten letters by a variety of individuals, including Yokohama citizens.

[Key Color]

In Lu Xun's writings, “wild grass” is a metaphor for the continuous cycle of life that decays to become soil and then takes on new life, and it is also a symbol of the strength that waits patiently for spring in the cold of winter.

Death and life, despair and hope, darkness and brightness, they do not exist as simple binary oppositions, but as a process of gradational mixing and circulation.

For the key color of the 8th Yokohama Triennale, I chose the color of the time of day when the darkness of night gradually becomes brightness of day.

It also expresses the process of change, from death to life, from despair to hope, and from darkness to brightness.

Okazaki Mariko



OKAZAKI Mariko (Designer and Founder, REFLECTA, Inc.)

Born in 1984 in Tokyo. Okazaki Mariko majored in architecture at Keio University SFC, then studied graphic design at Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. After returning to Japan, she worked at neucitora and village®, before becoming freelance in 2018 and establishing REFLECTA, Inc. in 2022.

Devoted to various cultural fields including contemporary art, performing arts, architecture and fashion, Okazaki seeks to explore design in an editorial/structural way based on observation and conceptual thinking.

Website: <https://reflecta.jp/>

Instagram: @reflecta.jp

8th Yokohama Triennale: Theme and Concept

8th Yokohama Triennale “Wild Grass: Our Lives”

“Wild Grass: Our Lives” was conceived at the end of 2021 as an exhibition theme for the 8th Yokohama Triennale. It was a time when the world gradually emerged out of COVID-19 pandemic, restarting and reconnecting. The preparation for the 8th Yokohama Triennale was part of this worldwide recovery, with an aspiration to set new standards, to distinguish itself among the 250 or so biennales and triennales that are held around the world today. This ambitious and courageous initiative exudes the light of hope. This light shoots out of a backdrop of devastation, desperation, and a profound sense of crisis brought about by the pandemic, climate change, the widespread turn towards conservative nationalism and authoritarianism, the Russian war in Ukraine, the rise of conspiracy theories in popular consciousness, and other multitudes of adversities. We were inspired to search for an exhibition theme that speaks of humble humanism, courage, resilience, faith, and solidarity.

This title is taken from the Chinese writer Lu Xun’s (1881–1936) anthology *Wild Grass*, penned from 1924 to 1926, during a turbulent period in Chinese history. Its 23 essays portrayed the personal and social realities that confronted him. For Lu Xun, the greatest sense of crisis and defeat came from the 1911 Xinhai Revolution. It overthrew the Qing government, which represented the old order. Yet the new order that formed in its place did not bring about fundamental changes to society. He soon embraced the idea of taking despair, instead of hope, as the starting point for his life, work, and thoughts. He fully accepted the fact that there would be no more hope or ambition, only darkness, darkness. At the same time, he devoted himself to finding an outlet in this complete darkness. In 20th-century China, Lu Xun was a singularly solitary individual who constantly rebelled against existing situations and simultaneously a thinker who stayed attentive to the movements of the world, contemplating the fate of individuals and humanity within them.

The exhibition theme “Wild Grass: Our Lives” aspires to Lu Xun’s philosophy of the universe and life. It doesn’t just call to mind the image of a fragile and defenseless existence, inconspicuous and alone, in the wilderness, with nothing to fall back on. It is also a symbol of a life force that’s unregulated, irrepressible, defiant, self-motivated, and prepared to fight alone at all times. Furthermore, there is no ultimate state of existence to arrive at. Every state of being is a mediation and a process in itself, where there is no victory or failure but only a perpetual state of internal movement. Thus, every state of being is potentially a messenger for each other, mediating for each other. These philosophical propositions are not abstract; they exist vividly in the world of experience, and are the experiences themselves. “Wild Grass” signifies a philosophy of life that elevates the irrepressible force of individual life to a respectable existence that transcends all systems, rules, regulations, and forms of control and power. It is a model for flexible expression of subjectivity.

The rapid global spread of COVID-19 that began in 2019 has led us to reflect on the irreconcilable contradictions of the globalization process. This pandemic is not a single public health emergency. It exposes, triggers or accelerates other existing problems and provokes new ones. Geopolitical, economic and social dysfunctions are intertwined in the pandemic. These interlocking debacles highlight the contradictions between old languages and new historical conditions, rooted in the political and social constructs and inventions of the 20th century. The contemporary world order came into being after the decline of socialist institutions and the end of the Cold War. One of the real crises facing different political systems today is the disconnection between the basic form of each political system and the form of society. Due to the constant division and solidification of social classes brought about by unfair distribution systems and the economic monopoly of oligarchies, individual lives cannot find their corresponding expressions at the political level. We long to escape our current predicament but have found ourselves trapped by the logic and structural suppression of our current social organizations. This experience has revealed not only the fragility of human existence but also exposes the limitations of the 20th-century design of political and social institutions.

8th Yokohama Triennale: Theme and Concept (continued from P4)

The mix of political hegemony, escalating ideological competition, and clashes of civilizations exerts an ongoing corrosive and destructive effect on the well-being of the contemporary world. The space for individual existence has been severely compromised and overwhelmed. The fight for equality and democracy remains relevant and even more urgent today. It is, therefore, a principle of ethics to reaffirm the meaning of the individual in the depth of history, as opposed to the history of the successful and powerful, and in contemporary society. Research around ordinary people and their lives can provide a stable and solid structure in the face of the complexities and challenges of constant change. However, the “individual” should not be an abstract concept that is inherently exempted from moral responsibility in the face of public events. We propose a modest imaginary where we are all outsiders living in the cracks, often stealthily dismantling the systems that are killing us.

In the 8th Yokohama Triennale, we wish to revisit a selection of historical moments, events, figures, and trends of thoughts since the beginning of the 20th century. Some examples include the resonance of Japanese and Chinese left-wing woodcut movements in the early 1930s, the rise of subjective imaginary in the postwar cultural construction in East Asia, the reflection on modernity after the global radical movements of the late 1960s, and the critical and emancipatory energy of postmodernism in full swing in the 1980s. On this basis, we draw inspiration from the anarchist practices and thoughts that have emerged since the proposal of the end of history, to explore options for possible dialogue between individuals and established rules, and institutions. In this Triennale, we prioritize the relationship between art and its intellectual underpinnings and champion the engagement of art with reality. We hope to generate a new imaginary of global friendship in the name of art, and call for the promising union of the spirit of individual internationalism and weak signals.



Liu Ding and Carol Yinghua Lu
Artistic Directors
8th Yokohama Triennale

Outline

Exhibition Title: 8th Yokohama Triennale “Wild Grass: Our Lives”

Artistic Directors: Liu Ding and Carol Yinghua Lu

Dates: March 15, 2024–June 9, 2024

[Open: 10:00–18:00 | Closed: Thursdays (except for April 4, May 2, June 6) | Total: 78 days]

Venues: Yokohama Museum of Art (3-4-1 Minatomirai, Nishi-ku, Yokohama)

Former Daiichi Bank Yokohama Branch (6-50-1 Honcho, Naka-ku, Yokohama)

BankART KAIKO (KITANAKA BRICK&WHITE 1F, 5-57-2 Kitanakadori, Naka-ku, Yokohama)

Organizers: City of Yokohama, Yokohama Arts Foundation, Japan Broadcasting Corporation [NHK],

The Asahi Shimbun, Organizing Committee for Yokohama Triennale

Official Website: <https://www.yokohamatriennale.jp/english/> Twitter: @yokotori_

【Contact/Inquiries】

Organizing Committee for Yokohama Triennale Press Contact (Y. Satomi, K. Yorimasa, F. Nishida)

E-MAIL: press@yokohamatriennale.jp TEL: +81-45-663-7232 (Mon–Fri:10:00~18:00)