

Keisuke Watanabe | 渡邊敬介



Keisuke Watanabe is a Japanese artist based in Kyoto, renowned for his dynamic and evocative drawings that often explore themes of sensuality and the human form. His work is characterized by the use of smoky black ink and minimalist lines, capturing refined sensuality and elegant simplicity —hallmarks of Japanese aesthetic discourse.

Watanabe's artistic process is deeply influenced by his background as a professional musician. He views drawing as a temporal art form akin to music, applying principles such as the flow of time, change and unity, and tension and relaxation to his compositions. This approach allows him to transcend traditional boundaries in search of new forms, capturing both the passage of time and the dynamic movement of the human body.

His large-scale scrolls, some reaching up to 12 meters in length, embody his belief that "life is in the lines." Through sweeping, elongated strokes, he captures the essence of fluid movement, as if each line breathes with vitality. These scrolls, always inspired by live subjects, offer an immersive experience of intimacy and transformation, mirroring the chaos and vibrancy of life itself.

Watanabe has exhibited his works both domestically and internationally, participating in art fairs such as the London Art Fair and Art on Paper in New York.

Music Is Performances

Keisuke Watanabe is renowned for his dynamic live drawing performances, where he captures the essence of live models in real-time. These sessions often feature collaborations with musicians and dancers, creating a multidisciplinary artistic experience.

In February 2023, Watanabe participated in an exhibition in Brussels alongside artist Yuiko Ráyka. The event featured live ink painting sessions where Watanabe worked with a live model, accompanied by music, offering attendees an immersive experience that blended visual art with performance.

One of Watanabe's notable works, "Music Exists - Bare M," created in 2006 during the 250th anniversary of Mozart's birth in Salzburg, exemplifies his approach to live model drawing. For this piece, he collaborated with live models from the Academy of Fine Arts in Salzburg, capturing their forms with bold lines and delicate strokes. This work reflects his ability to convey the rawness of both music and the human body, blending them into an intimate, flowing narrative.

Watanabe's live drawing performances are characterized by their immediacy and visceral connection. He often positions himself close to the model, immersing himself in their presence to capture fleeting moments of authentic expression. This proximity results in dynamic compositions that convey both the physicality and emotional depth of his subjects.

Through these live performances, Watanabe offers audiences a unique glimpse into the creative process, highlighting the interplay between artist and model, and the spontaneous emergence of art in the moment.

Exhibitions and Events

2025

- Takasegawa Art Festival, Kyoto, Japan
- music is = music exists in the wind, the shape of a dream a line that breathes, Solo Exhibition, Gallery G-77, Kyoto, Japan

2024

- Christmas Exhibition, Kyoto, Japan
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2023

- *Drawing the Sound*, Koshoji Temple, Kyoto, Japan

2022

- *Beautiful World Exhibition*, Kawamura Noh Theater, Kyoto, Japan
- *London Art Fair*, London, UK (Gallery G-77)

2021

Watanabe Keisuke in Kamigamo Shrine – DANCING THROUGH TIME, Kyoto, Japan

Organized by Gallery G-77, supported by the Agency for Cultural Affairs (AFF), Japan.

- A live drawing performance capturing a 12-meter artwork during a workshop featuring Noh performer Haruhisa Kawamura, cellist Tsubaki Yamaguchi, and belly dancer Asami.
- Personal exhibition inside the shrine's *Chōya* hall.

JARFO Shunga Exhibition, Kyoto International Museum of Art, Kyoto, Japan

2020

- *Art on Paper Art Fair*, New York, USA (Gallery G-77)
- *London Art Fair*, London, UK (Gallery G-77)
- *Music Is. Music Exists*, solo exhibition, Gallery G-77, Kyoto, Japan

2019

- Context Art Miami Art Fair, Miami, USA (Gallery G-77)
- AAF Art Fair Battersea, London, UK (Gallery G-77)
- Exhibited a 12-meter artwork at the former Asada Residence during the *Art Festival of Mines and Roads*, Ikuno Silver Mine, Hyogo, Japan
- On the 8th anniversary of the earthquake, displayed a 100-meter *Tohoku Earthquake Painting* in the precincts and garden of Kōshō-ji Temple, Kamigyō-ku, Kyoto. The exhibition included a hanging display from the main hall and a *kamishibai* (paper theater) presentation of the 100-meter work, accompanied by a sermon on "life" by the chief priest.
- *Contemporary Shunga Exhibition*, JARFO Kyoto Gallery, Kyoto, Japan

2018

- Solo exhibition "Music Is. Impromptu Improvisation" at Utsuwa-ya Menami, Kyoto, Japan
- Solo exhibition "Music Is" in collaboration with Yamaguchi Tsubaki (Hosao) at Masago Gallery, Osaka, Japan

2017

- Participated in the group exhibition "Artists Mourning the Signs of War" with a painting of the Atomic Bomb Dome at Gallery Sano, Kyoto, Japan

2015

- Solo exhibition of the 100-meter earthquake painting, alongside a two-week collaboration with Indian dancer Shakti at the Avignon Arts Festival, Avignon, France
- Collaborated with Shakti using the 100-meter earthquake painting at Kyoto Prefectural ALTI Hall, Kyoto, Japan
- Solo exhibition of the 100-meter earthquake painting and two-week collaboration with Indian dancer Shakti, along with a lecture on the 100-meter painting at the South Australia-Japan Association, during the Adelaide Arts Festival at Adelaide Town Hall and Adelaide Community Centre, Australia

2014

- Invited as a guest artist for an outdoor live drawing session with dancer Fumihiro Shimizu at an art festival hosted by Okayama City, Okayama, Japan
- Solo exhibition "100-meter Earthquake Painting (1,000 km, 100 m, 10 days)" at Ginza Seio Gallery, Tokyo, Japan

- Invited for an artist-in-residence program, creating work on-site and graduating as the top participant in Luton, a suburb of London, UK

2013

- Solo exhibition "Pina Bausch and Friends" (produced by Tokiko Koyama), collaborating with dancer Hironobu Oikawa and trumpeter Tetsuro Konishi at A's Gallery, Ginza, Tokyo, Japan
- Solo exhibition "100-meter Tohoku Earthquake" in London, UK
- Solo exhibition "Merry-Go-Round" at Shimada Gallery, Kobe, Japan

2012

- Supported by Study Union (NPO) to create works depicting disaster areas (traveled 1,000 km, creating a 100-meter work over 10 days on-site)

2011

- Solo exhibition "Works Created in Iwaki City, Fukushima, a Disaster Area" at Gallery Maya, Takatsuki City, Japan

2010

- Participated in "Gallerism 2010" selected by Gallery Maya, voted first place by visitors at the Osaka Prefectural Contemporary Art Center, Osaka, Japan
- Created works on-site in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam
- "Homage to Pina Bausch – Exhibition and Talk Event" at Finnegans Wake 1+1, Shinsaibashi, Osaka, Japan
- "Dancing Pina Bausch – Drawing the Dance Company's Rehearsals in Germany" at Gallery Acostage, Yashima, Takamatsu, Kagawa, Japan

2009

- Closely observed Pina Bausch's dance company, creating drawings of the rehearsal for their representative work "The Rite of Spring" in Wuppertal, Germany
- Solo exhibition "Cologne People Exhibition" at Tenri Japanisch-Deutsche Kulturwerkstatt, Cologne, Germany

2006

- Studied abroad for the second time at the Internationale Sommerakademie für Bildende Kunst Salzburg (founded by Oskar Kokoschka) in Austria

2005

- Solo exhibition in Chelsea, New York, USA
- Collaborated with dancer Hana (selected as the best dancer of the year by NPO Dance Box) using his own works at Dance Box (Tennoji), Osaka, Japan

2004

- Created works on-site in Mexico and Machu Picchu, Peru
- Received the Excellence Award at the 13th Aoki Shigeru Memorial Grand Prize Exhibition, which toured the Ishibashi Museum of Art in Kurume City, Axis Gallery in Roppongi, and Koriyama City Museum of Art in Fukushima, Japan
- Stadio Steps (Yuko Watanabe Ballet School) used his works as stage backgrounds for the ballet performance "Hansel and Gretel" at Hitachi Civic Center, Ibaraki Prefecture, Japan

2003

- Received the Shozo Shimamoto Award at the International Contemporary Art AU Exhibition in Kobe, Japan
- Exhibited at the Art Unidentified exhibition during the Venice Biennale in Venice, Italy
- Solo exhibition at the Osaka Prefectural Contemporary Art Center, Osaka, Japan