

# A Reappraisal of Norio Imai's White

再考:今井祝雄の白



White Ceremony - Holes Acrylic, cotton cloth, plastic mold | 255.3 x 316.5 x 18 cm | 1966/2014 | Photo: Nobutada Omote

Norio Imai made his debut as an artist in 1964 with the solo exhibition *Testimony of a 17-Year-Old*. Between 1964 and 1966, he produced a succession of rectangular and irregularly shaped white relief works, which were exhibited not only in the Gutai Art Exhibitions<sup>1</sup> but also in Independent exhibitions held throughout Japan at the time. The undulations that emerge from the simple forms beneath the smooth applications of white, together with the striking interplay of light and shadow evoked by the perforated holes, imbue the works with a remarkable intensity and the fresh vitality of an artist still in his teens.

Most of Imai's works from this period have since made their way to Europe, the United States, and across Asia. This exhibition focuses on the small number of vintage works that remain in Japan, reproductions of works from the 1960s,<sup>2</sup> later *tsuiseisaku*<sup>3</sup> works that showcase the breadth of his subsequent practice, alongside the white works Imai continues to develop.

Since the late 1960s, Imai has incorporated a wide range of media into his practice, including photography, video, and sound, and continues to produce and present conceptual works. This exhibition reappraises the world of white at the origin of his long artistic career.

1. Norio Imai began regularly exhibiting in the Gutai Art Exhibition with the 14th exhibition in 1964. In 1965, at the age of nineteen, he became the youngest member of the Gutai Art Association, and in 1966, a solo exhibition of his work was held at the Gutai Pinacotheca.
2. Imai was around twenty years old when he created the original works in the 1960s. At the time, he maintained a vigorous pace of production, but the cost and availability of materials made it impossible to preserve everything he created. As a result, some exhibited works were unavoidably dismantled, and their materials reused in subsequent productions. For pieces that were dismantled after exhibition and no longer survive, Imai later reproduced them using photographs and production notes from the period, as well as surviving original materials in certain cases.
3. Imai describes *tsuiseisaku* ("follow-up production") as follows:  
These works may be understood either as developments connected to images or concepts left unrealized at the time, or as new versions produced in later years based on ideas drawn from earlier works. In the case of his Gutai outdoor works and Mono-ha site-specific installations, *tsuiseisaku* is closer to "reenactment" than to "reproduction." Man Ray produced a number of works in multiple editions based on the same motif that differ somewhat in form yet may be understood as iterative *tsuiseisaku* in which the message of the work remains unchanged. Broadly speaking, *tsuiseisaku* may be understood as renewed pursuits of earlier modes of expression by the same artist.

## I Exhibition Information I

**Title:** *A Reappraisal of Norio Imai's White* 再考:今井祝雄の白

**Duration:** July 11 (Sat.) - August 29 (Sat.), 2026

\*Closed on Sundays, Mondays, Holidays and August 9 - 17.

**Venue:** ARTCOURT Gallery

**Hours:** 11:00am - 6:00pm [Sat. -5:00pm]

\*Due to the traffic restrictions for the Tenjin Festival, the gallery will close at 3:00pm on July 25 (Sat.).

Organized by ARTCOURT Gallery (Yagi Art Management, Inc.)  
Sponsored by Mitsubishi Estate Co., Ltd., Mitsubishi Materials Corporation,  
Mitsubishi Jisho Property Management Co., Ltd.

### Related events: July 11 (Sat.)

2:00pm - 3:30pm

**Talk [ Ayako Takahashi (Professor at Nagoya Zokei University) x Norio Imai ]**

3:30pm - 5:00pm Reception

\* RSVP required (email or phone), first 20 applicants.

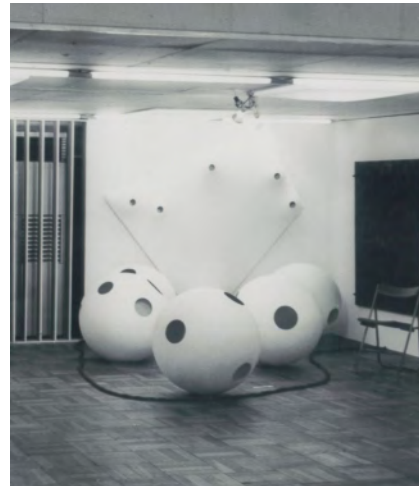
\*Please contact Ami Fukuda or Mizuho Haida at ARTCOURT Gallery for any inquiries including photographic materials.

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## I Selected Artworks to be exhibited I



Reference: Installation view of  
*17th Gutai Art Exhibition*,  
Takashimaya Department Store,  
Yokohama, 1966.  
Courtesy of Norio Imai

### **White Ceremony - Holes**

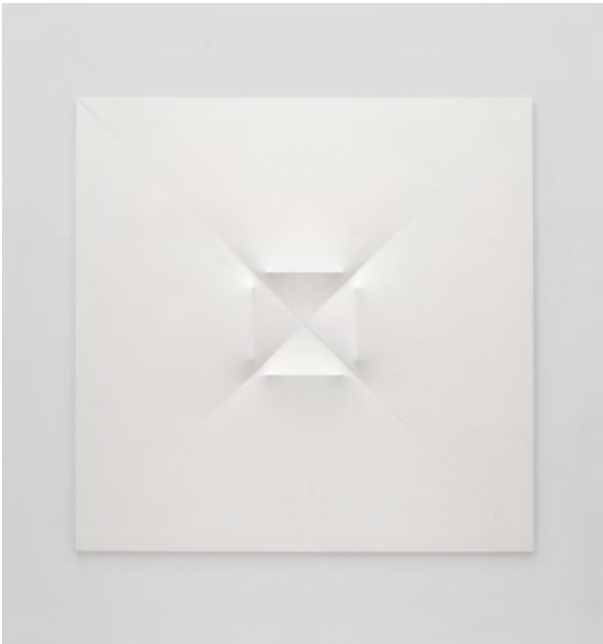
Acrylic, cotton cloth, plastic mold | 255.3 x 316.5 x 18 cm  
1966/2014 | Photo: Nobutada Omote

| Exhibitions |

2023 *Art Week Tokyo Focus: Worlds in Balance: Art in Japan from the Postwar to the Present*, Okura Museum of Art, Tokyo

\*Reproduced work was exhibited.

1966 *17th Gutai Art Exhibition*, Takashimaya Department Store, Yokohama



### **Work/e - Four parallels**

Acrylic, cotton cloth, wooden mold | 182 x 182 x 8.5 cm  
1965/2025 | Photo: Takeru Koroda

| Exhibition |

1965 *Indépendant Art Festival*, Gifu City Culture Center



### **White Ceremony C**

Acrylic, cotton cloth, plastic mold | 162 x 130.3 x 20 cm  
1966/2012 | Photo: Nobutada Omote

| Exhibition |

1966 *Solo Exhibition*, Gutai Pinacotheca, Osaka

**Norio Imai** 今井祝雄

- 1946 Born in Osaka.  
 1964 Participates in the 14th Gutai Art Exhibition. Continues to participate in all Gutai Art Exhibitions until the dissolution of the Gutai Art Association in 1972.  
 1965 Graduates from Osaka Municipal High School of Art and Industry (forerunner of the Osaka Prefectural Kogei Senior High School), department of fine art, yōga (Western-style painting) program. Joins Gutai Art Association.  
 1966 Receives 1st prize at 10th Shell Art Award.  
 1979 Starts *Daily Portrait* series (which is ongoing).  
 1991 Receives 2nd Osaka City Environment Amenity Award.

Norio Imai is the author of *Shiro kara hajimaru: Watashi no bijutsu nōto* ("Starting from White: My Art Notes") (Brain Center, 2001), *Yohaku to furēmu: Watashi no bijutsu nōto* ("Blank Space and Frame: My Art Notes") (Suiseisha, 2022), among other publications.

**| Selected Solo Exhibitions |**

- 2024 *Imai Norio: Drawing Out the Long Future*, Ashiya City Museum of Art and History  
*Norio Imai Solo Exhibition*, ARTCOURT Gallery, Osaka [’23, ’19, ’16, ’14, ’12]  
 2023 *Norio Imai: Time Scape*, Axel Vervoordt Gallery, Hong Kong  
 2018 *Norio Imai: Material Ecstasy*, Axel Vervoordt Gallery, Wijnegem, Belgium  
 2016 *Norio Imai: "White Event × moving images 1966-2016"*, Yumiko Chiba Associates  
 viewing room shinjuku, Tokyo  
 2013 *Norio Imai: White Event*, Axel Vervoordt Gallery, Antwerp  
 2005 *Daily Portraits of a Quarter Century*, Mssohkan, Kōbe  
 1981 *Solo exhibition with video works*, The Bank, Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
*Videotape Performance*, Video Gallery SCAN, Tokyo  
 1980 *Rectangular Time*, Galerie Kitano Circus, Kōbe  
 1979 *Solo exhibition of self-portraits*, Ban Garow, Osaka  
 1971 *Solo Exhibition*, Walker Gallery, Tokyo  
 1966 *Solo Exhibition*, Gutai Pinacotheca, Osaka  
 1964 *Testimony of a 17-Year-Old*, Noonu Gallery, Osaka

**| Major Public Collections |**

- Ashiya City Museum of Art and History  
 Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka  
 The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto  
 The National Museum of Art, Osaka  
 Shiga Museum of Art  
 Tokyo Photographic Art Museum  
 Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art  
 The Miyagi Museum of Art  
 Axel and May Vervoordt Foundation, Belgium  
 Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles  
 Rachofsky Collection, Dallas, US  
 Pharmascience Collection, Canada  
 By Art Matters Museum, Hangzhou, China

**| Selected Group Exhibitions |**

- 2026 *New Humans: Memories of the Future*, New Museum, New York  
 2025 *Asian Avant-Garde Film Festival 2025: Time Will Tell*, M+, Hong Kong  
 2024 *Seoul Mediacity Pre-Biennale*, SeMA Bunker, Seoul Museum of Art, Korea  
 2023 *Art Week Tokyo Focus: Worlds in Balance: Art in Japan from the Postwar to the Present*, Okura Museum of Art, Tokyo  
*After the Landscape Theory*, Tokyo Photographic Art Museum  
*Re: Startline 1963-1970/2023 Sympathetic Relations Between the Museum and Artists as Seen in the Trends in Contemporary Japanese Art Exhibition*, The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto  
 2022 *Into the Unknown World - GUTAI: Differentiation and Integration*, Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka; The National Museum of Art, Osaka  
 2018 *Exposition Gutai, l'espace et le temps*, Musée Soulages à Rodez, France  
 2016 *Performing for the Camera*, Tate Modern, London  
 2015 *Re: play 1972/2015 - Restaging "Expression in Film '72"*, The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo  
 2013 *Gutai: Splendid Playground*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York  
 2012 *Gutai: The Spirit of an Era*, The National Art Center, Tokyo  
 2011 *Nul=0: The Dutch Nul Group in an International Context*, Stedelijk Museum Schiedam, The Netherlands  
 2009 *Vital Signals - Early Japanese and American Video Art*, Japan Society, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Yokohama Museum of Art; The National Museum of Art, Osaka and other locations, continuing into 2010  
 2007 *Radical Communication: Japanese Video Art 1968-1988*, The Getty Center, Los Angeles  
 2000 *The Earthquake Disaster and Art - What Has Been Created Since 1.17*, Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Modern Art [forerunner of Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art]  
 1994 *Time in Contemporary Art*, The Museum of Modern Art, Shiga [forerunner of Shiga Museum of Art]  
 1990 *European Media Art Festival*, Osnabrück, Germany  
 1988 *Japan high technology art exhibition*, Taiwan Museum of Art [forerunner of the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Art], Taichung  
 1983 *Photography in Contemporary Art - The Works from the 1970s*, The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo; The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto  
 1978 *From Underground Cinema to Private Films*, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum  
 1975 *International Open Encounter on Video*, Espace Pierre Cardin, Paris; Galleria Civica D'arte Moderna, Ferrara, Italy; Centro de Arte y Comunicación, Buenos Aires  
 1974 *11th Japan International Art Exhibition - Realism in the Age of Reproduced Images*, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum  
 1973 *8th Japan Art Festival*, Moderna Galerija, Ljubljana, Yugoslavia, followed by Kunsthalle Mannheim, Germany  
 1971 *10th Contemporary Japanese Art Exhibition - Man and Nature*, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum; Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art  
 1970 *16th International Short Film Festival Oberhausen*, Germany  
*Gutai Group Display*, Midorikan Pavilion Entrance, Expo'70 World's Fair, Suita, Osaka  
 1968 *Contemporary Japanese Art: Fluorescent Chrysanthemum*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London  
*8th Contemporary Japanese Art Exhibition*, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum; Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art  
 1967 *1st Sōgetsu Experimental Film Festival*, Sōgetsu Hall, Tokyo; Yasaka Hall, Kyoto  
*5th Biennale de Paris*, Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris, France  
 1966 *Nul 1966 Art Exhibition*, International Galerie OREZ, The Hague, The Netherlands  
*From Space to Environment*, Ginza Matsuya Department Store, Tokyo  
*Trends in Contemporary Art*, The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto Annex [forerunner of the The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto]  
 1965 *Indépendant Art Festival*, Gifu City Culture Center; Kogane Park; Nagara River

\*Please contact Ami Fukuda or Mizuho Haida at ARTCOURT Gallery for any inquiries including photographic materials.