

ACG Press release - Exhibition Announcement -

# Genta Ishizuka: Absence

石塚源太「Absence」



[Work to be exhibited] **Membrane Spot (Bengara)**  
*Urushi*, hemp cloth | *Kanshitsu*-technique | 35.6 x 30.4 x 21.4 cm | 2025  
 Photo: Takeru Koroda

ARTCOURT Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition by Genta Ishizuka (born 1982).

Trained in *Urushi* Lacquering at Kyoto City University of Arts and later participating in an exchange program at the Royal College of Art in London, Genta Ishizuka began exhibiting as an artist in the late 2000s after graduating with his MFA. He produces abstract sculptural forms shaped through the dry lacquer technique<sup>1</sup>, characterized by organic, fluid contours, as well as two-dimensional works that conjure a sense of cosmic spatiality through the *togi-dashi* method<sup>2</sup>. At the heart of Ishizuka's practice lies a sustained inquiry into perception, stirred by his medium's translucent membrane and lustrous sheen.

By capturing the fundamental sense of beauty inherent in the living nature of lacquer as a material, Ishizuka's work engages the tense boundary between craft and contemporary art, eliciting an unanticipated shift in perception. He has garnered wide acclaim in Japan and abroad, earning him the Grand Prize at the Loewe Foundation Craft Prize in 2019 and the Incentive Prize at the Kyoto Prefectural Cultural Award in 2024. His works have been acquired by major institutions such as the Kyoto City KYOCERA Museum of Art, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the British Museum, and the Minneapolis Institute of Art, marking the steady trajectory of his artistic career.

Until now, Ishizuka's pursuit has been the articulation of the surface sheen through the expression of the membrane of the *urushi*. In this exhibition, his first at ARTCOURT gallery in six years, he turns to a new sculptural series, *Membrane Spot*, featuring matte finishes and perforated forms that expose internal hollows. Through these works, he contemplates the lacquer membrane itself, their very presence shaped by absence, as the essence of *urushi* expression. The exhibition also includes his semi-relief wall-mounted pieces inspired by fragments of historic dry lacquer sculptures and new works from his ongoing *Taxis Groove* series which offer insight into the next phase of Ishizuka's evolving practice.

Without assigning any particular meaning to the form of internal core (*tai*), Ishizuka has long devoted himself to creating surfaces that draw out the expressive potential of *urushi*. His attention has remained on the superficial coating, which simultaneously reflects light and holds an unfathomable depth. For Ishizuka, the membrane is not a "manifestation of an invisible interior," but a relationship where fundamentally dissimilar elements—inside and outside, light and dark, self and other—engage in mutual permeability, each acting on the other, each shaped by contingency.

At the center of this exhibition is *Membrane Spot*, a sculptural series realized through the *dakkatsu kanshitsu*<sup>3</sup> (de-cored dry lacquer) technique. In this technique, the tree-sap-derived *urushi* loses its internal core (*tai*) that once gave it form, leaving behind the *urushi* membrane which transforms into a presence of its own. Openings pieced through the surface reveal the hollow interior that had been hidden within.

The sheen, once a source of layered meaning, has been replaced by a smooth, matte finish. What emerges is a presence that, having lost what it once enclosed, has ceased to exist as a membrane, becoming something that defies definition as such. This presence stands in deepening indistinguishability from the absence saturated with the living darkness within.

Ishizuka has also shown deep interest in *urushi* and its relationship to humankind—deeply embedded in the textures of daily life across East Asia in the form of bowls, chopsticks, and other implements—which has been shaped not only through visual experience but also through tactile perception, aural resonance, and olfactory presence. He speaks of how this intimate, embodied memory of *urushi* serves as a point of connection to his practice and how he has long nurtured conceptual explorations of textures and forms that evoke the act of applying *urushi* and the structural interplay of interior and exterior in vessels, the bowl chief among them.

Ishizuka draws on his sensibility and intellectual acuity to deconstruct the techniques and material properties of *urushi* and reconstructs them into expressions that hold within them untapped possibilities that elude interpretation through the established heuristics of duality or causality. At the same time, he brings into dialogue the milieu of *urushi* rooted in the textures of lived experience with the purity of visual experience. We invite you to experience this new undertaking by Genta Ishizuka.

1. A technique in which hemp cloth is layered over the internal core (*tai*), then coated, abraded, and polished through multiple applications of lacquer, wood powder, and polishing powder to create the final form.
2. A technique in which multiple layers of different colored lacquer are applied during the undercoating stage, sometimes embedding materials such as shell, and then abrading and polished with whetstones or similar tools to reveal patterns. Ishizuka uses unconventional materials for embedding, such as utility knife blades, fishing hoods, washers, sewing needles, and the lead for mechanical pencils.
3. A technique in which a portion of a dry lacquer form is pierced to remove the internal core (*tai*), leaving the interior hollow.

## [Exhibition Information]

Title: **Genta Ishizuka: Absence** 石塚源太「Absence」

Duration: June 21 (Sat.) – July 26 (Sat.), 2025 \*Closed on Sundays, Mondays and Holidays.

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 (Fri.).

### ◆ Related events: June 21 (Sat.)

2:00pm – 3:30pm Talk [Minoru Shimizu (Art critic. Professor at the Doshisha University) x Genta Ishizuka]

3:30pm – 5:00pm Reception

\*Talk is RSVP required (email: info@artcourtgallery.com / tel: 06-6354-5444), first 20 applicants.

\*Both events are free admission.

Organized by ARTCOURT Gallery (Yagi Art Management, Inc.)

Sponsored by Mitsubishi Estate Co., Ltd., Mitsubishi Materials Coporation, Mitsubishi Jisho Property Management Co., Ltd.



[Reference] **Stellar Dance**  
*Urushi*, washers, cutter blades, needles, fishhooks, staples, plywood, and others  
 120 x 120 x 3.5 cm | 2018

\*Please contact Michiko Kiyosawa and Mizuho Haida at ARTCOURT Gallery for any inquiries including photographic materials.

OAP Art Court 1F, 1-8-5 Tenmabashi, Kita-ku, Osaka 530-0042 | info@artcourtgallery.com | T: (+81) 6-6354-5444 | www.artcourtgallery.com

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## Genta Ishizuka: *Absence*

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### ◆ Artist Statement

#### Absence

Several years ago, in the process of adapting a sculptural work to a wall-mounted piece, I cut into its form. The incision exposed the interior, and as I peered inside, I realized for the first time that my work was essentially composed of a membrane formed by the dry lacquer technique. Until then, I had conceived of my works as singular, solid masses, but in that moment of looking within, I became acutely aware that their essence resided entirely in the membrane itself.

Lacquer is a refined sap extracted from trees and has no form of its own. It takes on shape and expression when supported by a base, or *tai*. In my work, these *tai* are elastic fabric bags containing structural elements such as Styrofoam spheres or aluminum duct hoses. From there, I employ the dry lacquer (*kanshitsu*) technique, in which layers of hemp cloth are applied to the surface and fixed in place using lacquer, followed by a base coating and successive applications of increasingly refined lacquer.

In creating the wall-mounted piece, I removed the internal core, leaving only the dry lacquer membrane, which stood on its own. That moment of separation revealed a coexistence of presence and absence. This experience lies at the origin of my current solo exhibition.

As taught in the *Heart Sutra*, “form is emptiness, and emptiness is form”: all things lack fixed substance, and it is precisely within the void that meaning emerges. The lacquer membrane, while containing the hollow of absence, nonetheless comes into being as an undeniable presence.

Genta Ishizuka



[Reference] *Membrane Spot*  
*Urushi*, hemp cloth | *Kanshitsu*-technique  
 35.9 x 29.3 x 19.5 cm  
 2025 | Photo: Takeru Koroda



[Plan sketch]

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## ◆ Genta Ishizuka 石塚源太



- 1982 Born in Kyoto, Japan  
 2006 BFA, Kyoto City University of Arts  
 Exchange program at the Royal College of Art, London, UK  
 2008 MFA, Kyoto City University of Arts  
 2019 Awarded the Gand-prix at LOEWE Craft Prize 2019  
 Awarded the The Best Young Artist Award by City of Kyoto  
 2024 Awarded the Kyoto Prefectural Culture Prize (the Incentive Prize)

## | Solo Exhibitions |

- 2025 *'Primary Surface' by ARTCOURT Gallery*, CADAN YURAKUCHO Space L, Tokyo  
 2024 *Internal*, Erskine, Hall & Coe, London, UK  
 2021 *ACG Window Gallery: Genta Ishizuka*, ARTCOURT Gallery, Osaka  
 2019 *Polyphase Membrane*, ARTCOURT Gallery, Osaka  
 2018 *Membrane*, Erskine, Hall & Coe, London, UK  
 2017 *Relative Tactile*, Art Space Niji, Kyoto  
 2015 *Surface Tactility*, Art Space Niji, Kyoto  
 2013 *Gloss Reaction*, Art Space Niji, Kyoto  
 2011 *Drifting Boundaries*, ARTCOURT Gallery, Osaka  
 2010 *wonderment*, Art Space Niji, Kyoto  
 2009 *Extra Dimension*, Art Space Niji, Kyoto  
 2007 *Sign from the Surface*, Art Space Niji, Kyoto

## | Group Exhibitions |

- 2025 *LOEWE Crafted World*, Harajuku, Tokyo [24 Shanghai]  
*Materiality in Progress: Exploring New Materialism in Contemporary Art*,  
 Curated by Akari Endo-Gaut, Nina Johnson, Miami, USA  
*Small Works, Great Artists*, Erskine, Hall & Coe, London, UK [20,23]  
 2024 *Art Kogei from Japan to the World 'The Future of Artisanal Beauty: Vessels, Wrapping, Decorations'*, TERRADA ART COMPLEX II BONDED GALLERY,  
 Tokyo / Temple Kenninji, Kyoto  
*LOEWE Lamps*, Palazzo Citterio, Milan, Italy  
 2023 *Worlds In Balance: Art In Japan From The Postwar To The Present*,  
 Okura Museum of Art, Tokyo  
*Shippudoto*, Wajima Museum of Urushi Art, Ishikawa  
*Slow Culture #kogei*, Kyoto City University of Arts Gallery @KCUA, Kyoto  
*ACG 20th Anniversary Vol.2*, ARTCOURT Gallery, Osaka  
*Visionaries: Making Another Perspective*, Kyoto City KYOCERA  
 Museum of Art, Higashiyama Cube, Kyoto  
 2021 *Genta Ishizuka + Akane Saijo by ARTCOURT Gallery*, CADAN YURAKUCHO, Tokyo  
*THE POWER OF ORIGIN*, The Japan Folk Crafts Museum, Osaka  
 2019 *4th Triennale of KOGEI in Kanazawa-Kogei as Contemporary Craft:*  
*Transcending Boundaries*, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art,  
 Kanazawa; People's Gallery A and B  
*Yo Akiyama & Genta Ishizuka*, Erskine, Hall & Coe, London, UK  
*LOEWE FOUNDATION Craft Prize 2019*, Sogetsu Kaikan, Tokyo  
*ACG Villa Kyoto Vol.002 Kyotaro Hakamata x Genta Ishizuka*, ACG Villa Kyoto  
 2018 *15 Years*, ARTCOURT Gallery, Osaka  
*Contemporary Lacquer*, Kanazawa Yasue Gold Leaf Museum, Ishikawa  
 2017 *Hard Bodies*, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, USA  
*Takamijima-Kyoto: On the Far Side of Daily Life* [participated via  
 App Arts Studio], Gallery Fleur, Kyoto Seika University, Kyoto  
*Open Theatre 2017*, KAAT Kanagawa Arts Theatre, Yokohama  
 2016 *Setouchi Triennale 2016* [participated as App Arts Studio], Takamijima, Kagawa  
*Reflection*, Gallery II, Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Gifu  
*Bi no Yokan*, Takashimaya Art Gallery [traveling in Nihonbashi, Osaka, Kyoto,  
 Shinjuku, Nagoya, Yokohama]  
*Feather*, Kyoto City University of Arts Gallery @KCUA, Kyoto, Japan  
 2015 *Rendez-vous*, Onomichi City Museum of Arts, Hiroshima, Japan  
*Japan spirit x15*, ORIE ART GALLERY, Tokyo, Japan  
*Still Moving* [participated via App Arts Studio], Former Sujin Elementary School, Kyoto  
*Selected Artists in Kyoto Celebrating 400 Years of Rimpa*, The Museum of Kyoto  
 2014 *New Horizons in Contemporary Craft Art Part I: Lacquer and Pottery*  
*Beyond Materiality*, Shibuya Hikarie 8 / Cube 1, 2, 3, Tokyo  
*Selected Artists in Kyoto The Way of Parasophia*, The Museum of Kyoto  
 2011 *Rokko Meets Art* [participated via unit (yu)], Mt. Rokko Sanjo station, Hyogo  
 VOCA, The Ueno Royal Museum, Tokyo  
 2010 *Kyo - Sei*, Kyoto City University of Art Gallery @KCUA, Kyoto  
 2008 *Art Court Frontier #6*, ARTCOURT Gallery, Osaka

CRIA, Kyoto Art Center, Kyoto

2006 *Kyoto Gense Art Museum*, Kennin-ji Zenkyo-an, Kyoto2005 *FRAME*, CASO, Osaka

## | Public Collections |

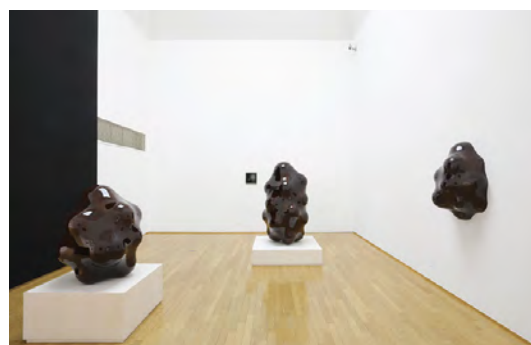
The British Museum, London, UK  
 Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK  
 Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, UK  
 Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, USA  
 Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art, Kyoto, Japan  
 LOEWE Art Collection, Spain  
 Ueshima Museum Collection, Tokyo, Japan



[Reference] Taxis Groove (Torn)  
 Urushi, hemp cloth, other | Kanshitsu-technique  
 116 x 86.5 x 90.3 cm | 2025 | Photo: Takeru Koroda



*Visionaries: Making Another Perspective*  
 Kyoto City KYOCERA Museum of Art, Higashiyama Cube, Kyoto(2023)  
 Courtesy of Kyoto City KYOCERA Museum of Art | Photo: Takeru Koroda



Solo Exhibition *Polyphase Membrane*  
 ARTCOURT Gallery, Osaka (2019) | Photo: Takeru Koroda

\*Please contact Michiko Kiyosawa and Mizuho Haida at ARTCOURT Gallery for any inquiries including photographic materials.

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