

# Arisa Kumagai | Heaven Stolen

2025.8.23 (sat) -10.11 (sat)



Arisa Kumagai, *Say yes to me*, 2025, diptych. Photo: Hikari Okawara

Heaven, cannot be stolen. No true thief exists.

There are only people who think "Maybe that person is a thief." "That person is a thief." "Maybe I'm the thief." "I am a thief."

But for those who think this way, the "thief of heaven" becomes real.

Again and again, they blame others, then blame themselves, until they come to realize, the thief exists only within.

There are things, as countless as the stars, that we cannot forgive. And I too, may not be forgiven.

Heaven, simply is. It just exists.

Arisa Kumagai

## GALLERY KOYANAGI

Gallery Koyanagi is pleased to announce *Heaven Stolen*, a solo exhibition by Arisa Kumagai, which will be held from Saturday, August 23 to Saturday, October 11, 2025. This marks Kumagai's fourth solo exhibition at Gallery Koyanagi, following *Single bed* in 2019, *My yearning to be You* in 2022, and ...apparently *God is forgiving* in 2023, her first in two years.

Drawing on deeply personal motifs, her grandfather dressed in high-end Italian shirt from the family-run boutique, the adorned hands of her mother and other women wearing an eclectic mix of flamboyant jewelry, and flowers offered to her father who died alone, Kumagai's work reflects universal themes such as wealth and poverty, life and death. Through these intimate recollections, she transforms private memory into works of art that transcend individual experience. Her dramatic imagery resonates with the viewer's own memories and experiences, evoking a deep sense of empathy and connections to their personal life stories. In recent years, Kumagai has studied at a Catholic church and deepened her interest in the forms of faith she encountered during her time in New York and Paris. At the same time, she has also begun to depict motifs of prayer rooted in Japanese culture. She is now entering a new phase of expression, weaving together her paintings with poems of her own creation.

The unforgettable and striking title of this exhibition, *Heaven Stolen*, meaning thief of heaven, is drawn from Christian belief. It is said that some use this phrase in Japan to refer to those who receive baptism as death approaches. Heaven is the place where the souls of the faithful find eternal peace in the presence of God. In principle, entry to heaven is not determined by one's deeds, but is a path open to all who believe in Jesus Christ. Yet for those who have devoted their lives to serving God, the so-called "thief of heaven," someone who turns to faith only at the hour of death, may appear opportunistic, even prompting thoughts like "How unfair" or "How sly." Kumagai acknowledges that this raw, undeniable human response resonates with her own inner experience. It may be that love and hate, though opposites, are inseparable, and that this tension lies at the root of our emotional being.

The triptych titled "It's OK. It's OK. It's OK." features a composition of small sneakers and flowers in a vase. The worn-out children's shoes are said to have been given by a man to his child, a man who had once been violent toward the child, grew estranged from his family, and eventually died alone. The phrase "It's OK," used as a title, may at first sound gentle, but its rapid repetition three times conveys the artist's anger toward the ongoing and unresolved issue of child abuse. Beyond the flowers, one sees a statue of the Virgin Mary, a symbol of unconditional love, and a small cross gently swaying at the end of a rosary. It is as if one can hear a quiet prayer, wishing for the protection of children who are suffering somewhere in the world, right at this moment.

"Say yes to me" is a work born out of Kumagai's reverence for the beauty and terror inherent in the primitive. On a canvas the size of a single bed, in keeping with Kumagai's distinctive style, she depicts a young deer, shot and exposed in a river. Since ancient times, the motifs of the river and deer have been revered in sacred spaces across cultures. Yet they are also objects of fear, beings that hold within them an inherent duality. Kumagai combined this work with a piece from her "Leisure Class" series, which she had been developing since her student days. The term Leisure Class refers to those who consume luxury goods to display social prestige, and it is deeply connected to Kumagai's personal background. A closer look at the bold pattern on the man's silk shirt reveals the barrel of a gun pointing toward the young deer

# GALLERY KOYANAGI

depicted in the adjacent panel, an image that can be read as an allusion to the ongoing racial tensions that persist in contemporary society. A total of six new paintings, including four other large-scale and smaller oil works in addition to the mentioned two, as well as ten drawings will be on display.

A reception will be held on the opening day, Saturday, August 23, from 5:00 to 7:00 PM, with the artist in attendance. An artist talk is also planned for the same evening. We would be grateful for your interest and coverage of this occasion.

For materials and image requests, please contact our press representative.  
Kindly inform us when planning to publish any related content.

Gallery Koyanagi



Arisa Kumagai, *It's OK. It's OK. It's OK.*, 2025, triptych. Photo: Hikari Okawara

**Arisa Kumagai Booklet Release Announcement**

In conjunction with the exhibition, Gallery Koyanagi will release a limited-edition booklet of works by Arisa Kumagai, titled *White Witch*, in an edition of 500 copies.

Among them, 10 copies will be available as special editions, each accompanied by one or two original drawings. These original drawings will be on view in the gallery's viewing room throughout the exhibition period.

**Author's Comment**

In Japan, a pure white kimono is traditionally worn only at birth or in death.

But only women, at the threshold between life and death, are allowed to wear the shiro-muku.

By wearing this white wedding kimono, a woman metaphysically dies as the daughter of her birth family and is reborn as the daughter of the husband's family.

Even if this custom is rooted in a patriarchal system, for me,  
the act of dying once and being reborn felt like a dream.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that the witch is a symbol of gruesome history in which countless innocent people were burned.

"White Witch" may be taken to mean a good witch, but that is not the intention at all.

Who gets to say who's a good witch? And who lit the flames, branding others as bad?

In recent years, the word "witch" has often been used as a symbol of empowerment.

It is through the currents of history and time that meanings evolve, gaining power even through contradiction.

This booklet brings together a selection of my paintings exhibited at Gallery Koyanagi along with newly written poems.

Silence filled with contempt, pure prayers, raging torrents of anger, dizzying opulence; let me kiss the feet of God.

I offer my heartfelt thanks to Ms Atsuko Koyanagi, and everyone at Gallery Koyanagi, who handed me a wand and said, don't hide your horns and become a witch.

Arisa Kumagai

---

**Bibliographic information**

Title: *White Witch*

Author: Arisa Kumagai

Text: Tomoko Yabumae (Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo)

Design: Rie Shimoda

Published by: Gallery Koyanagi

Translation: Tomoko Araki

Price: To be announced

Language: Japanese and English

Pages: 20 pages

Format: A4 size

# GALLERY KOYANAGI

Press images

Notes for reproduction:

- Photograph must be credited with the caption and credit line exactly as specified below.
  - Image must not be cropped, edited or overlaid with texts/objects in any way.
  - The provided digital image must be destroyed after the use.
- 

Image 1



[Caption 1]

Arisa Kumagai

*It's OK. It's OK. It's OK.*

2025

oil on panel, triptych

center : 109 x 145 cm

left and right : 33.5 x 22.2 cm each

Please note:

This work consists of a set of three pieces and must be published as a complete set.

The proportions and spacing between the works may not be altered.

[Credit 1]

© Arisa Kumagai / Courtesy of Gallery Koyanagi

Photo by Hikari Okawara

GALLERY KOYANAGI

Image2



[Caption 2]

Arisa Kumagai

*Say yes to me*

2025

oil on panel, diptych

97 x 195 cm each

Please note:

This work consists of a set of two pieces and must be published as a complete set.

The positions of the two pieces may not be reversed.

If displaying them side by side is not feasible, you may place them vertically.

In that case, the portrait of the man must be on top, and the image of the deer below.

[Credit 2]

© Arisa Kumagai / Courtesy of Gallery Koyanagi

Photo by Hikari Okawara



GALLERY KOYANAGI

Image 3



Image 4



[Shared caption for 3 and 4]

Arisa Kumagai

*Pool side*

2025

charcoal and CHOCOPEN on paper

30 x 42.3 x 2.5 cm (frame)

[Shared credit for 3 and 4]

© Arisa Kumagai / Courtesy of Gallery Koyanagi

Photo by Hikari Okawara

# GALLERY KOYANAGI

## Exhibition outline

Artists : Arisa Kumagai

Exhibition title : Heaven Stolen

Exhibition dates : Saturday, August 23 — Saturday, October 11, 2025

[Opening Reception : Saturday, August 23, 2025, 5-7pm]

Opening hours: 12-7 pm

Closed on Sundays, Mondays and National Holidays

## Address:

Gallery Koyanagi

Koyanagi Bldg. 9F, 1-7-5 Ginza, Chuo-ku,

Tokyo 104-0061, JAPAN

## Access:

Tokyo Metro: Ginza, Hibiya, and Marunouchi line Ginza Station, Exit A9 /

Yurakucho line Ginza 1-Chome Station, Exit 7

Tel.+81-(0)3-3561-1896 / Fax. +81-(0)3-3563-3236

Email: [mail@gallerykoyanagi.com](mailto:mail@gallerykoyanagi.com)

Website: <http://www.gallerykoyanagi.com>

Press inquiry: please contact us to [mail@gallerykoyanagi.com](mailto:mail@gallerykoyanagi.com) for further information



Arisa Kumagai

---

- 1991 Born in Osaka
- 2013 B.A. in Oil Painting Course, Kyoto  
University of Art & Design, Kyoto
- 2015 M.A. in Mixed Media Field, Kyoto  
University of Art & Design, Kyoto

A graduate of Kyoto University of the Art and Design, Kumagai received several institutional honors at the university's graduation exhibition, including the Akira Asada Prize, the Senjyu Hiroshi Encouragement Prize, and an Excellence Award. Her work draws on motifs deeply rooted in her personal background and family history, rendered with exceptional technical precision. The dramatic interplay of light and shadow, characterized by the depth of black created through multiple layers of translucent pigment, at times evokes comparison to Caravaggio.



Photo: Sadaho Naito

In her painted world, opposing forces such as life and death, love and hatred coexist, reflecting not only universal human experiences of pain and suffering, but also issues still pervasive in contemporary society.

#### Solo Exhibitions

- 2025 Heaven Stolen, Gallery Koyanagi, Tokyo
- 2023 *...apparently God is forgiving*, Gallery Koyanagi, Tokyo
- 2022 *My yearning to be You*, Gallery Koyanagi, Tokyo
- 2019 *Single bed*, Gallery Koyanagi, Tokyo
- 2015 *Leisure Class*, Gallery Art Composition, Tokyo
- 2013 MAMA, ATAMATOTE 2-3-3, Tokyo

#### Group Exhibitions

- 2025 *Waste, Pencils and Handwritten Art Exhibition*, UNKNOWN HARAJUKU, Tokyo
- 2024 *On Hare Day*, SCÈNE, Tokyo
- ONE SINGLE BOOK*, Gallery Koyanagi, Tokyo
- TO KYOTO TEN - The Echoes of East Kyoto*, WHAT CAFE, Tokyo
- Collection #08*, rin art association, Gunma, Japan
- Observation*, YUKIKO MIZUTANI, Tokyo
- 2023 *MtK satellite Vol.3*, Mtk satellite, Aichi, Japan
- 2022 *Under Current satellite*, N&A Art SITE, Tokyo
- 1st. MIMOCA EYE*, Marugame Genichiro-Inokuma Museum of Contemporary Art, Kagawa, Japan
- Under Current*, Powerlong Museum, Shanghai
- young okazaki vol.02*, MtK Contemporary Art, Kyoto

# GALLERY KOYANAGI

- 2021 GROUP SHOW: 5 ARTISTS, KOSAKU KANECHIKA, Tokyo
- 2020 *Shell Art Award 2020*, The National Art Center Tokyo, Tokyo  
*Photographs*, Gallery Koyanagi, Tokyo
- 2017 *Portrait*, Gallery Koyanagi, Tokyo
- 2016 *ULTRA x ANTEROOM exhibition 2016*, Hotel Anteroom Kyoto  
*ARTOTHÈQUE SELECTION 2016*, Kyoto University of Art & Design, Kyoto
- 2015 *STUDIO HAIDENBAN open studio*, STUDIO HAIDENBAN, Kyoto  
*Konton kara Odorideru Hoshi tachi 2015* (exhibition of selected students from Kyoto University of Art & Design), SPIRAL GARDEN, Tokyo  
*Kyoto University of Art and Design Degree Show*, Kyoto University of Art and Design, Kyoto
- 2014 *Politics Narcissism*, ARTZONE, Kyoto  
*Group show: Arisa Kumagai, Yuko Tanaka, Reiko Yamazaki*, Gallery Kunimatsu, Tokyo/Kyoto  
*23rd annual scholarship recipient art exhibition*, The Sato Museum of Art, Tokyo  
*Art Collages Exchanging Exhibition*, Nagoya University of the Arts, Aichi, Japan  
*Pr PROJECTS exchanging exhibition (Masato Kobayashi laboratory of Tokyo University of the Arts x Kyoto University of Art & Design Graduate School)*, Pr PROJECTS room, Kyoto  
*SPURT 2014*, Kyoto University of Art & Design, Kyoto  
*The 32rd Ueno Royal Museum Grand Prize Exhibition*, The Ueno Royal Museum, Tokyo
- 2013 *Shell Art Award 2013*, The National Art Center, Tokyo  
*HOP2013*, Kyoto University of Art & Design, Kyoto  
*PARADE*, 3F project room, Kyoto  
*Hajimari no heya (The room of beginning)*, Koyodo Museum of Art, Nagano, Japan  
*Kyoto University of Art and Design Degree Show*, Kyoto University of Art & Design, Kyoto
- 2012 *Hongik International Art Festival*, Hongik University, South Korea  
*What is missing? Golden hands*, Gallery-i, Kyoto  
*Exhibition of selected excellent students from Kyoto University of Art & Design*, Kyoto University of Art & Design, Kyoto  
*ARTZONE SELECTION*, ARTZONE, Kyoto

## Awards, Grants

- 2022 Selected for 1st. MIMOCA EYE, Marugame Genichiro-Inokuma Museum of Contemporary Art
- 2015 Excellence Award, the Graduation Exhibition of Kyoto University of Art & Design Graduate School
- 2014 Akira Asada Prize, SPURT 2014 of Kyoto University of Art & Design Graduate School  
Selected for The Ueno Royal Museum Prize
- 2013 Selected for The Shell Art Award by Showa Shell Sekiyu K.K.  
Received prizes; Senju Hiroshi Encouragement Prize, Uryuyama Prize, Prize of the department at the Graduation Exhibition of Kyoto University of Art & Design  
Grant from Sato International Cultural Scholarship Foundation, Sato Museum of Art  
Grant from the Japan Arts Foundation

## Public Collection

Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo