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四年中的種種里程碑與回憶。當代藝術家 **Shohei Takasaki** 的創作。

Shohei Takasaki 訪談

文 | Kana Yoshioka · 2021年8月15日

Shohei Takasaki 是一位於東京、波特蘭兩地旅居並活躍於多國的藝術家。在本次訪談中，他談論了他在 2021 年的一些想法。

生命真的非常繽紛燦爛。有時深不可測，有時卻又非常動態。

藝術家 Shohei Takasaki 透過他的藝術創作呈現對日常生活的所思所感。他從東京開始到波特蘭的藝術生涯，至今也有十年，並持續地在爆發式成長著。近期，他將把他在波特蘭最後兩年和剛搬回日本這兩年間的創作，集合收錄在畫冊《Where is Everybody》中，並在惠比壽 NADiff a/p/a/r/t 發表並同時舉辦個展《Dinosaur head, Lightning, Grid》。我們來到現場透過採訪詢問關於他藝術生涯的種種，並希望了解更多他想透過作品傳達的事。

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當你越靠近一件事，你就越難完全去理解它。這是個受大地藝術啟發的展覽。

- 是否能談談你是怎樣開始製作這本畫冊的？並且本次的展覽是關於什麼？

Shohei Takasaki (後文以 Shohei 稱)：這個展覽概念源自於我在 2019 年離開美國前在波特蘭舉辦的一個展覽《你昨晚睡哪？》。當時那間畫廊很小，所以我就在思考要怎麼去使用這個空間。我沒有硬塞東西，但我放了一張大到會在空間裡斜卡住的畫。我這樣做是因為這呈現出了人與人之間的關係，就像我覺得，當你越靠近你親近的人的時候，比如朋友、父母、戀人或自己的小孩，你會越覺得實際上他們對你而言是個陌生人。

同樣的，畫作越大，當你越靠近它，你也就越難去完整地看到整件作品。所以展覽名稱《你昨晚睡哪？》就是關於當你對一個信任的人有了「他到底在想什麼？」的那個瞬間。這是因為嫉妒和猜疑，或從另一個角度看的話，這是出自於愛，但透過這個裝置我想說的是，人到最後總是孤獨的。



- 所以你的意思是說，當你越靠近一個人，你就越看不清楚他們的樣子——就算他們是確確實實的形體。

Shohei: 對。我應該提一下的就是，這個展覽概念其中一個來源是美國著名觀念藝術家 Robert Smithson 的一件作品。1960 和 70 年代主要在美國和英國興起的地景藝術運動(Earthworks, Earth

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art) 中，他和 Walter De Maria、Michael Heizer 等人是核心人物。他最有名的作品之一《螺旋堤》，是在猶他州大鹽湖上的一個超大螺旋圖案。我有去大鹽湖看過，而且它成為了開啟我在創作上的新思路。這個作品就是一大堆石頭跟一片完全乾掉的湖，然後當我實際親身去經驗這件作品時，因為它真的太大了，我發現我根本無法去理解它。這也就是為什麼透過空拍攝影或藍圖等等的紀錄過程會這麼有趣，或許這是第一件能讓觀者感受到時間的作品吧。

所以它讓我去想到，如果把《螺旋堤》帶到家庭場域中，它是可以套用在個體關係上的。當你越靠近時就越覺得「我們為什麼越來越遠了？」

- 所以你在波特蘭辦的展覽促成了這次在日本的展覽？

Shohei: 波特蘭展覽結束後我就回到日本，然後剛好遇到疫情開始大流行，強迫人們只能長時間待在家中，而我呢基本上也就是家裡和工作室兩點一線。我兒子待在家沒辦法去學校上課，我也更常和家人相處。回日本後因為這樣的環境影響，讓我開始被迫思考家的意義時就剛好有人找我舉辦展覽跟出版畫冊，所以我想這樣恰好能把波特蘭的展覽內容在不同的國家和土地上呈現（這次是日本）。有了這個想法後我便開始到處尋找狹小的空間，然後就找到了 NADiff a/p/a/r/t。七月我會搬到雪梨，那剛好我在波特蘭的最後兩年 and 這次我回日本的時間一樣，都是兩年，所以我想試著在不同的地方做做看一樣的主題內容。

- 這個展覽裡有作品是你回日本後做的嗎？

Shohei: 因為疫情所以我長時間待在家，畫的畫也更多了，而且我在背包裡都會帶上好攜帶的紙和油性彩色鉛筆，我兒子在公園玩的時候我就會旁邊畫畫，或在家人睡了之後在餐桌上畫。所以呢，很顯然待在工作室的時間長短，和會不會做出好作品沒有關係（笑）。我畫得比以前更多，而且過了一段時間後才意識到竟然畫了超多畫。

- 那當你看到你這些數量驚人的作品時有什麼想法？

Shohei: 我變得更能看到繪畫和圖畫之間的關係。我有些繪畫創作的東西是受到那些圖畫的啟發，或者反過來，我被我在畫布上畫的東西打到，所以回家後在廚房裡又畫了些東西。這兩者之間的關係非常有趣，而且，我的獨處時光就是我自己和畫布一起在工作室的時間，然後通常我在速寫本上畫圖時都是和其他人一起的時候。

我是什麼？：意識到這個問題後，開始去了解媒材

- 你在美國住了很多年，你的創作方式有改變嗎？

Shohei: 改變了很多。在十幾二十幾歲時，我就只是個小屁孩，所以一切都是靠感覺。我不在乎藝術史那類的事，就真的只靠感覺。我甚至不知道要怎麼繃畫布，當時覺得「為什麼需要知道？」或是「為什麼不買現成繃好的畫布就好了？」（笑）我的意思是，這沒有錯，可是會讓腦

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袋裡的想法有限。最初一切都只是為了要開心好玩，或看起來很炫很帥，但當我三十幾歲開始到在美國住的時候，我開始思考我是誰。

那裡有各種不同的種族和語言，還有各式各樣的生活方式跟文化。但當人們問我：「你是誰？」的時候，我回答不出來。所以當我開始思考我是誰時，問題就變成了「藝術家是什麼？」我一邊思考這個問題一邊繼續作為藝術家創作，最後我終於明白，即使藝術也有自己的規則，而且我們的創作必須保持不斷發展進化。如果你想要跳進一個藝術形式裡，就必須了解藝術史，不然甚至會沒辦法講出你在 2021 在做什麼。我是在美國時才開始學藝術的，是不是很老梗？（笑）



- 有人教過你嗎？

Shohei: 我在波特蘭的時候認識了西奧·當斯-勒·古因（Theo Downes-Le Guin），他現在就像我的導師。也幫我的畫冊寫了前言。他每年都會來我工作室跟我聊藝術。西奧是我的導師、朋友和畫廊主，對藝術懂很多，也在波特蘭當地指導很多藝術家讓他們了解什麼是藝術。西奧是第一個直接對我的藝術作出評論的人，而且教我關於藝術的事。我沒上過藝術學校，所以我非常感謝他。每次西奧來工作室的前一天，我都會很認真思考要給他看什麼，然後要怎麼展示...尤其是在早期的時候。遇見他讓我改變了對藝術的想法，另外我在波特蘭時也會常常去紐約，所以我在和當地其他藝術家的交流中也學到很多。

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- 你在國外住了滿長的時間，你認為這些作品反映了多少你的“日本特質”？

Shohei: 對我來說，日本也不算我的家鄉。我太太不是日本人，我小孩是混血兒。我在日本時雖然是講日文，但在家的話其實不太用日語，我慢慢地失去了自己的根。所以不管是回到日本還是在波特蘭，都不會覺得「我回家了！」，我想我已經沒有了國籍意識。

- 我感覺這是種進化，或者說你就只是地球上的某個人而已。我有時會想，未來種族和國籍之間的界線會越來越模糊。一個人的生活方式和想法在未來會比以前都更重要，所以你傳達出的這種對自身國籍的迷失感，或許很有可能會是一種新藝術的開始。

Shohei: 有更多的選擇當然是件好事，對吧？出國也都比以前更容易了，在我們生活的這個世界裡如果你想和不同國家的人交流，都是馬上就能做到的事。我覺得我兒子長大後會有更多選擇，可能可以說大概 60 種不同的語言也說不定。（笑）

將負面的事變成笑聲，散播藝術

- 你之後要移居澳洲，在未來你有任何想做的主题或新的嘗試嗎？

Shohei: 我想做更多雕塑。其實從去年開始，我每天都用在工作室能找到的一些材料做一些嘗試。我會在台坐上用膠水之類的，用綁或穿孔的方式把材料固定在一起，然後拍照，拍完照後就會把它們拆掉。我一直把這個當作一種練習，並以此作為一種紀錄，但現在我開始想用木頭或鐵做一個看看，然後完成後也不去拆。

在波特蘭我有一個很大的空間讓我切木材，做些床啊桌子啊之類的，這也是一種很棒的精神訓練。譬如在工藝製作中有一句話叫做「量兩次，切一次」。你如果事先做好精確的丈量然後只切割一次的話，所有的東西就會很完美牢固的接合在一起。但繪畫不是這樣，剛好相反。基本上這不是 $1+1=2$ ，所以我想做更多雕塑，因為做木工對訓練大腦很有幫助，再加上我在澳洲的工作室也會很更大間。

- 你有任何想要探討的主题嗎？

Shohei: 通常日常生活中遇到負面或有壓力的事就會成為我的作品命題，但我覺得當你設定好主题而且這是會被公開展示的時候，最好還是加入一點幽默感。因為如果你只把憤怒和壓力當作主题的話，就純粹只是在生氣而已，觀眾不會去同情你。而且如果你摻入一些幽默感，常常會更容易地去傳達感受。當有了笑聲，作品就會傳播開來，不然你得必須走得很極端才行。沒有深入思考的作品是不會傳播的。

我在七八年前在科威特做展覽時，我感覺就像任何國家一樣，所有的年輕人都有很多被壓抑的壓力。他們主要靠石油致富，但政府讓人絕望，還有各種保守規定，很多事都因為宗教的關係被禁止。所以譬如在時尚上面，他們溜滑板的時候會穿著傳統白色長袍和包頭巾（keffiyeh），但

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配上休閒短褲和 Vans 板鞋。這讓我意識到，當你對體制越感到有壓力和不滿，就越容易孕育創意的種子。



這就是為什麼現在日本創作者可能會有機會。可是日本的年輕人應該更加意識到的是自己承受的壓力。或是說，如果他們離開日本然後客觀地去看，他們應該能夠看出沒有任何一個國家能比日本還瘋狂。

有越來越多的人認為他們是正常的，但同時也開始意識到「什麼是正常？」我很期待能看到在那發生的事。

Four years of significant marks and memories. Works by contemporary artist Shohei Takasaki

2021-08-15

Author Kana Yoshioka

Shohei Takasaki is an artist based out of Tokyo and Portland whose career is unfolding across numerous countries. In this interview, he discusses what he wanted to convey in 2021.

Life is a truly colorful thing. Sometimes it's subtle, and at other times, dynamic.

Artist Shohei Takasaki uses his art to express what he feels in his day-to-day life. It's been about 10 years since he started his career in Tokyo and moved to Portland. Since then, he has grown exponentially as an artist. Recently, he compiled his work from his last two years in Portland and his two years after returning to Japan into the art book, *Where is Everybody*, and held the exhibition *Dinosaur head, Lightning, Grid* at the Ebisu book & art gallery [NADiff a/p/a/r/t](#) to commemorate the book's publication. We went there to ask him about his career and what he wants to convey through his work.



The closer you get to something, the harder it is to comprehend. An exhibition that drew inspiration from Land Art.

—Could you tell us about how you started working on your art book, *Where is Everybody*, and what the exhibition *Dinosaur head, Lightning, Grid* is about?

Shohei Takasaki (Hereinafter Shohei): This exhibition has conceptual roots in an exhibition called *Where did you sleep last night?* that I did in Portland, right before I left the US in 2019. The gallery was a compact space, so I was thinking about how to activate it. I didn't forcefully cram stuff into a small space, but I put a very big painting in there. A painting that was so big that it'd basically get stuck diagonally.

I did that because it represents the relationships between people. I felt like the closer you get to people you're close to—like friends, parents, lovers, or your children, for example—the more you come to realize that they're actually strangers to you.

In the same way, the bigger the art piece and the closer you are to it, the harder it is to comprehend the whole work. So the title, *Where did you sleep last night?* is about the moment where you think "What is this person really thinking?" about someone you actually trust. That comes from jealousy, or if you look at it from another perspective, love. But I did the installation wanting to convey that at the end of the day, people are actually alone.



—So you mean, the closer you get to someone, the more you lose sight of them—even though they actually do have a clear shape.

Shohei: Right. I should mention that one of the sources for this show's concept is a work by a famous American artist named [Robert Smithson](#). He's a conceptual artist who was a central figure in the Land art (Earthworks, Earth art) movement that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, mainly in the US and the UK, along with Walter De Maria, Michael Heizer, and others. One of his most well-known works, *Spiral Jetty*, is a big spiral drawing on the ground at Utah's Great Salt Lake. I actually went to the Great Salt Lake and saw it, and it was an art piece that opened up new ideas for me. When you stand before it, it's a bunch of big rocks, and then just a completely dried up lake. Experiencing the work in person, it's too big to make sense of it. That's why the process of capturing the whole thing by looking at aerial photographs or things that were documented like blueprints from the production, is interesting. Perhaps it was the first art piece to make viewers feel a sense of time.

I was inspired by that, and I thought that if you bring *Spiral Jetty* to the domestic sphere, inside the home, it applies to individual relationships. The closer you get, the more you feel like, "Why are we growing more distant?"

—So you did a show in Portland, which led to this art show in Japan.

Shohei: I returned to Japan after the show in Portland ended, and right away, the coronavirus pandemic happened. So, people were spending even more time at home. In my case, I was basically just going back and forth between my house and studio. My son couldn't go to school, so he was at home, and I was with family more often. I'd returned to Japan, and just as I was being forced by circumstance to think about the meaning of home, I was asked to make an art book and do a show.

I thought it would be a good idea to present the same show and content that I did in Portland, but in a different country and land (which was Japan this time). From there, I started looking for a compact space, and I found NADiff a/p/a/r/t. I'm moving to Sydney at the end of July, but since my last two years in Portland and my two years in Japan happened to be about the same amount of time, I tried to keep the same theme but in a different place.

—Did you create the works in this exhibition after returning to Japan?

Shohei: I've been drawing a lot more because I've been spending more time at home due to the coronavirus. Also, I've been packing easy-to-carry paper and oil-based colored pencils in my bag, going to the park, and drawing while my son is playing, or drawing at my dining table after my family goes to sleep. Obviously, staying in the studio for a long time doesn't necessarily mean you'll make good work. (laughs) I was drawing a lot more, and after some time, I realized that I'd done a bunch of drawings.



Dinosaur head, Lightning, Grid, was held at NADiff a/p/a/r/t

—Was there anything you thought after seeing the immense number of works you had created?

Shohei: I'm able to see the relationship between painting and drawing even more than before. There are some things I've painted that are inspired by drawings, or on the flip side, I've been inspired by things I've painted on canvas to draw something in my kitchen. The relationship between the two is very interesting. Also, my alone time is when I'm in the studio with my canvas, whereas when I'm drawing in my sketchbook, I'm often sharing time with someone. So, there's also the alone time versus the shared time with someone else.



From Shohei Takasaki's latest art book, *Where is Everybody*

“What am I?”: Learning about the art medium after becoming aware of that question

—You lived in the US for many years. Did your method of creating change after moving there?

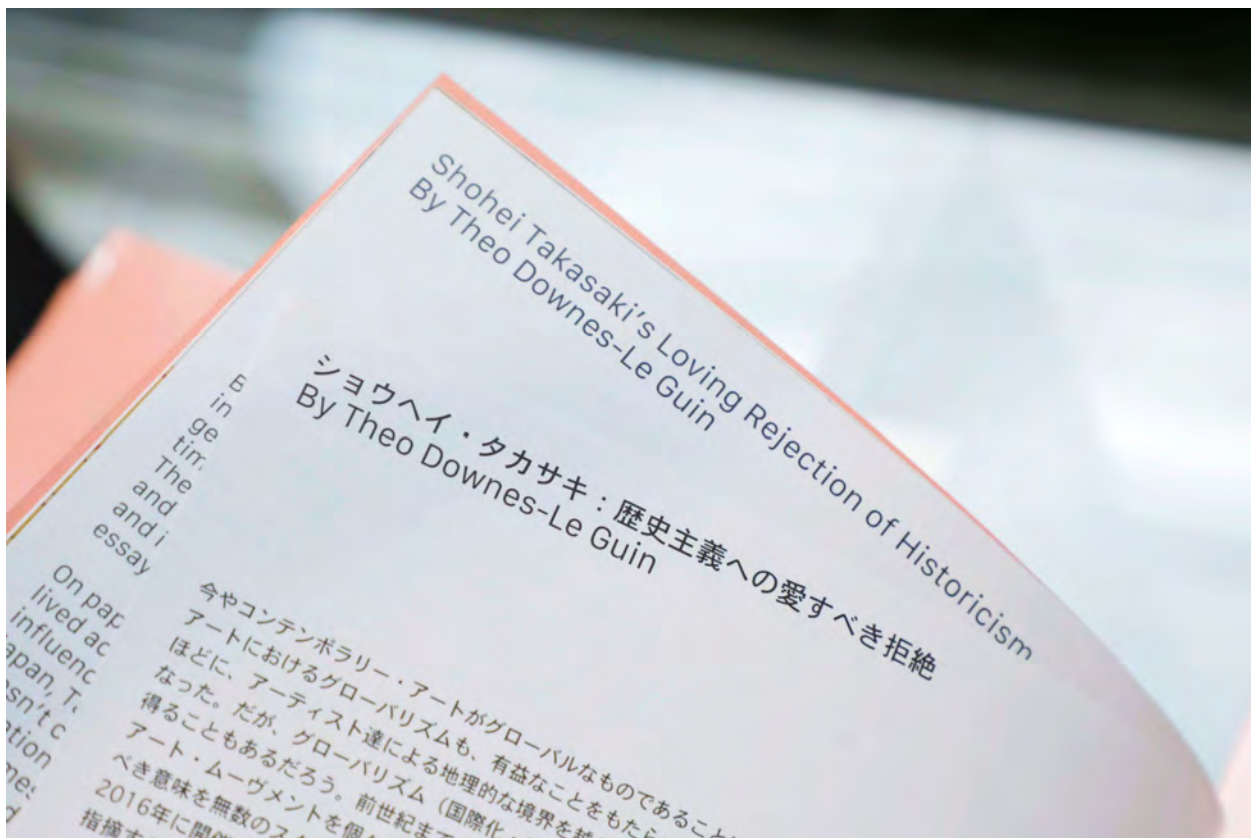
Shohei: It changed quite a bit. In my teens and twenties, I was just a little punk, so it was really just about the feeling. I didn't care about stuff like art history, and I did it all based on a feeling, so I didn't even know how to mount a canvas. I thought, “Why do I need to know?” or “Why not just buy a pre-stretched canvas?” (laughs) I mean, there's nothing wrong with that. But I didn't have many options in my head. First and foremost, it was all about having fun, or feeling good, or looking cool.

But when I started living in the US in my early thirties, I started thinking about who I was. There were different races, different languages, different ways of life, and different cultures. When people asked me, “Who are you?”, I couldn't respond. So when I started thinking about who I was, that became, “What is an artist?” I continued working as an artist while thinking about that, and eventually, I finally realized that even art has rules and that the art we make must keep evolving. And if you're going to hop on an art format, then you need to know art history, or else you can't even convey what you're doing in 2021. I started learning about art when I went to the US. Isn't that cliché? (laughs)



—Did you have someone that taught you?

Shohei: In Portland, I met a guy named Theo Downes-Le Guin, who is like a mentor to me now. He also wrote the foreword for my art book. He would come to my studio once a year and talk to me all about art. He is my mentor, a friend, and a gallery owner. He's knowledgeable about art and teaches local artists in Portland what art is. Theo was the first to critique my art directly, and he taught me all about art. I never went to art school, so I'm very thankful for Theo. The day before Theo would come to my studio, I'd think hard about what to display and how...especially in the early days. Meeting him changed the way I thought about art. Also, when I was in Portland, I went to New York a lot, so I was able to learn a lot from talking to other artists there.



From Shohei Takasaki's latest art book, *Where is Everybody*

—You lived abroad for a while. How much of your “Japanese-ness” do you think is reflected in this collection’s works?

SHOHEI: For me, my home isn't Japan, either. My wife isn't Japanese, and my kid is biracial. I use Japanese when I'm in Japan, but I don't use it that much at home, and I've gradually lost track of my roots. Whether I'm returning to Japan or going to Portland, I don't feel like, “I'm home!”, so I feel like I've lost sight of my nationality.



Shohei Takasaki's latest art book, *Where is Everybody*

— I feel like that's evolution, or it's as if you're just a person of this Earth. I sometimes think that going forward, the borders between race and nationality will increasingly fade away. I feel like one's lifestyle and way of thinking will be more important than ever in the future, so the feeling you expressed of not knowing what nationality you are could potentially give way to new art.

Shohei: It's a good thing to have more choices, isn't it? It's easier to go abroad than ever before, and we live in a world where if you want to be involved with people from other countries, you can do that right away. I think when my son grows up, he'll have a wider range of choices. Maybe he'll be able to speak around 60 different languages. (laughs)

Delivering art by turning negative themes into laughter

— You're going to relocate to Australia, where you'll be based. Are there any themes or new things you'd like to try in the future?

Shohei: I want to do more sculptures. Actually, regarding sculptures, I've been making them in some form every day since last year, using only things I could find in the studio. I'd fasten, glue, and pierce things on the same pedestal, then I'd take photos of that. After I took photos, I'd take them apart. I was doing that as an exercise and would keep a record that way, but I was thinking that from now on, I'd like to use wood or iron and make a piece without taking it apart. In Portland, I had a big space, so I'd cut the wood myself and make beds or tables, and it was a great mental exercise. For example, in craftwork, there's a saying, "Measure twice, cut once." If you make the proper preliminary arrangements and cut once, everything comes together solidly. But with painting, it doesn't work that way. If anything, it's the opposite. Essentially, it's not $1+1=2$. So, I want to make more sculptures because craftwork makes for a great mental exercise. Plus, when I go to Australia, my studio space will be bigger.



Dinosaur head, Lightning, Grid, was held at NADiff a/p/a/r/t

—Are there any themes you'd like to address?

Shohei: Usually, the negative or stressful things I experience in my daily life become the theme for my work, but I think when you set that theme and make it public, it's better to add a bit of humor. When you make stress or anger the theme, it's hard for the public to sympathize with you if you're just angry. And a lot of the time, it's easier to convey your feelings if you present them with some humor mixed in. The work spreads when you add a bit of laughter, or otherwise, you have to go really extreme. Things that are half-baked don't spread. When I did an art show in Kuwait seven or eight years ago, I felt that like any country, all the young people had a lot of pent-up stress. They were mainly rich from oil money, but the government was hopeless, the

rules were conservative, and there were a lot of things they couldn't do because of religion. So when it came to fashion, they were wearing traditional white dresses and a kind of headdress (keffiyeh), but with Dickies shorts and Vans while skateboarding. That instance made me realize that the more stressed and dissatisfied you are with the system, the more seeds of creation are born.

That's why there might be an opportunity for Japan's creators today. But in the case of Japan's youth, they should be more aware of the stress they're under. Or, if they leave Japan and look at it objectively, they should be able to see that there are no other countries as crazy as Japan. There are more and more people who thought they were normal, but are starting to realize, "What is normal?" I'm looking forward to seeing what happens there.



Shohei Takasaki, *Where Is Everybody* (GALLERY COMMON)

Shohei Takasaki

Shohei Takasaki is a contemporary artist born in Saitama Prefecture in 1979. After working on album art and event flyers, he began an art career in earnest. Following a 10-year stint working in Portland, he relocated to Tokyo in the summer of 2019. There, he mainly exhibited paintings in addition to sculptures and installations. His work has been exhibited in Portland, Los Angeles, Kuwait, Melbourne, Hong Kong, Tokyo, and other cities. Additionally, his work is part of a permanent collection at the Seattle Starbucks headquarters and the Hoxton Portland. In the summer of 2021, he relocated to Sydney, Australia, where he plans to begin a new phase of his career.

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Kana Yoshioka is a freelance editor and writer. After studying abroad in New York in the early 1990s, she returned to Japan, where she became an editor at a club culture magazine. From 2003 to 2015, she worked as an editor for the street culture magazine warp. Today, she works as a writer/editor for various media in music, art, and fashion with a focus on street and club culture.