

Kumi Kaguraoka



Photo by Yume Takakura

Born in Tokyo, Japan. Lives and works in Tokyo  
2022 ~ 2023 Lives & Works in Brooklyn, New York

#### Education

2012 M.F.A., Musashino Art University, Department of Scenography, Display and Fashion Design

Kaguraoka focuses on the interface between human society and the body, exploring the "image of the body" through cultural universality. Her major works include "Metamorphosis of the Aesthetic Body," a series of devices that form the aesthetic body, in which she reconsiders artificial body modifications such as "decoration, restraint, and loss," which are still practiced in human history, and approaches the "aesthetic value" behind such modifications. Recent exhibitions include "The lens within your heart" from the TAKEUCHI COLLECTION", WHAT MUSEUM (2023; Tokyo, Japan), "My body becomes my heart?" SusHi Tech Square, (2023; Tokyo, Japan), "The Metamorphoses of Beautiful Bodies.-Consideration about the aesthetic value of the future body" SEIBU SHIBUYA (2022; Tokyo, Japan), "The REBEL Exhibition" The Untitled Space (2022; New York, USA), "kapCHər" The New York Art Residency and Studios Foundation (2022; New York, USA), and "The Art Science Exhibition at Kyoto University London University Goldsmiths School of Art and Science International Symposium - Art Innovation Exhibition 2019" Kyoto University (2019; Kyoto, Japan).



website



instagram

# CV

## Solo Exhibitions

- 2022 The Metamorphoses of Beautiful Bodies.-Consideration about the aesthetic value of the future body., SEIBU SHIBUYA, Tokyo
- 2020 Study of Non-verbal-communication., gallery ON THE HILL, Tokyo
- 2019 The Metamorphoses of Beautiful Bodies., SEIBU SHIBUYA, Tokyo
- 2019 Study of Metamorphose., FabCafe Tokyo, Tokyo
- 2018 Dialogue between the Body and The World vol.2, WACOL STUDYHALL KYOTO, Kyoto
- 2015 Dialogue between the Body and The World vol.1 (2015-2016), T-Art Gallery, Tokyo
- 2015 Pick the Light - SICF16 Grand Prize Artists Exhibition, spiral, Tokyo
- 2015 Pick the Light - Recording of Light, BRÜCKE, Tokyo

## Group Exhibitions

- 2023 Will my body turn into mind?, SusHi Tech Square, Tokyo
- 2023 The lens within your heart from the TAKEUCHI COLLECTION, WHAT MUSEUM, Tokyo
- 2022 The REBEL Exhibition, The Untitled Space, New York
- 2022 Sift, Season IV International Residency Exhibition and Open Studio, NARS Foundation, New York
- 2022 Traces, Season III International Residency Exhibition and Open Studio, NARS Foundation, New York
- 2022 kapCHƏr, Season II International Residency Exhibition and Open Studio, NARS Foundation, New York
- 2022 Artist in Residency, New York Art Residency and Studios (NARS) Foundation, New York
- 2020 ONE PIECE CLUB VOL.13, 3331 Arts Chiyoda, Tokyo
- 2020 Break Zenya Exhibition supervised by Tomio Koyama, HILLSIDE TERRACE, Tokyo
- 2020 Hikarie Contemporary Art Eye vol.13-supervised by Tomio Koyama, Shibuya Hikarie 8, Tokyo
- 2019 Kyoto University and Goldsmiths, University of London Art Innovation International Symposium 2019, Kyoto University, Kyoto
- 2017 SHIBUYA STYLE vol.11, SEIBU SHIBUYA, Tokyo
- 2016 SICF16 WINNERS EXHIBITION, spiral, Tokyo
- 2015 SHIBUYA STYLE vol.9, SEIBU SHIBUYA, Tokyo
- 2015 BankART Artist in Residence OPEN STUDIO 2015, BankART1929, Kanagawa
- 2015 SICF16 (Spiral Independent Creators Festival16), spiral, Tokyo

## Grants and Awards

- 2021 Yoshino Gypsum Art Foundation Fellowship
- 2019 Kyoto University and Goldsmiths, University of London Art Innovation International Symposium 2019, Junya Yamamine Award
- 2017 Recipient of the istyle Art and Sports Foundation Fellowship
- 2015 SICF16 (Spiral Independent Creators Festival 16) Grand Prize
- 2012 Excellence Musashino Art Graduate School Graduation Work Award

## Residency Program

- 2022 Artist in Residency, New York Art Residency and Studios (NARS) Foundation, New York
- 2015 BankART Artist in Residence, BankART1929, Kanagawa, Japan

## Planning / Support of making art works

- 2010 SAKIORI BU, Workshop and exhibition planning., Towada Art Center, Aomori, Japan
- 2010 The Merchant of Venice, Support of making costume and stage arts., Japan-European Performing Arts Exchange, London, Istanbul, Tokyo
- 2010 Pericles, Support of making costume., Japan-European Performing Arts Exchange, Tokyo, London
- 2010 Karasawagi, Support of making costume., Japan-European Performing Arts Exchange, Tokyo, Brazil

## Teaching

- 2022 Specially Appointed Adjunct Professor Cultural Diplomacy & Art Business Group, The COI Site, Tokyo University of the Art
- 2021- Saitama Prefectural University Guest Lecturer
- 2016- Musashino Art University Guest Lecturer

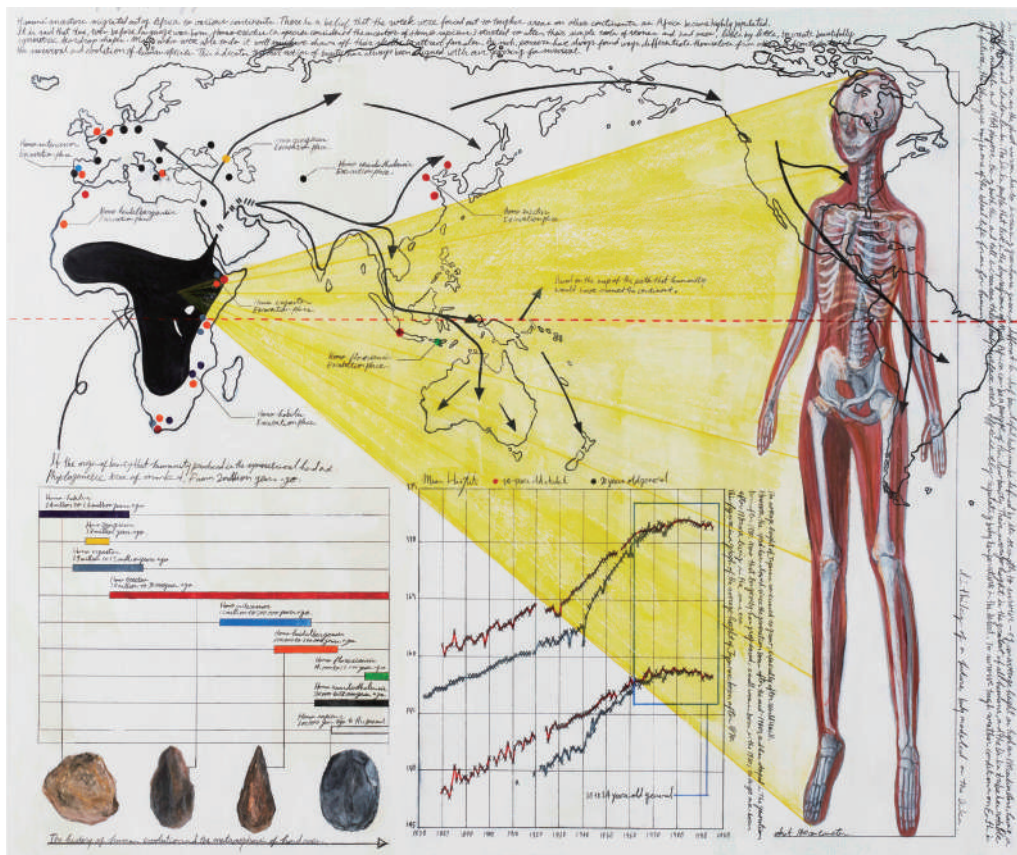
## Statement

Being born to parents who were medical professionals, it was very inevitable that I would develop an interest in the "body". The town where I was born and raised had a large international hospital and a university hospital, and I remember growing up catching glimpses of my father doing image training for surgery at home.

I create research-based works based on the premise that "the body is a tool for communicating with the world". Currently, under the title "The Metamorphosis of Beautiful Bodies", I am researching the relationship between aesthetic values and changes in body shape in human society and history, and am creating work on this theme. I started making works with this theme because I felt uncomfortable with the aesthetic values presented by society. For example, the main character in a famous Japanese anime that influenced me as a child and remains popular today has long blond hair, small face, slender, and big blue eyes. And, when I was a teenager, mixed-models and Gyarū who looks like far from Japanese often appeared on the covers of many fashion magazines. Then, I was high school student, some of my classmates already had cosmetic surgery and changed their eyes size to bigger. In the past few years, the number of Japanese people regardless of gender in cosmetic surgery and beauty salons has increased. Against this background, I began to wonder where, why, and how aesthetic values are born and change, and began to investigate the relationship between the body and aesthetic values and the origin of beauty from various fields such as anthropology and philosophy as well as art.

This "The Metamorphosis of Beautiful Bodies" infers the body formed from the present and future "aesthetic values" from the history of human birth and forms its "aesthetic body". And it is a cynical expression of the contradictory state born of blind pursuit to beauty by humanity. It asks viewers what the aesthetic value is, imprinted by history, culture, religion, gender, etc., and imagines what the future aesthetic body will be for humanity. Value standards in human society change due to a variety of factors. And there is the noise that occurs between pioneers who find new values and those who follow past standards of value. No matter how advanced science becomes, there are contradictions in human beings that can't be solved by science, and I believe that these contradictions are what make us human. Many countries are celebrating diversity and becoming a society where people can be who they want to be, but what is a society that is easy to live in?

I will continue to create art work based on the "body" and communicate with others using that artwork. And, I believe that this production will transcend the realm of art and become a creation that will lead to a new future, and that it contains the potential to change our current values without being bound by conventional wisdom.



Title : Study of Metamorphose. [ About human evolution and future global environment. 02 ]  
Year : 2022 / Size : W35.8×H30×D1.8 inch

The Metamorphosis of Beautiful Bodies.

美的身体のメタモルフォーゼ

2016- (ongoing)



## The Metamorphoses of Beautiful Bodies. 2016 - (ongoing)

In our society, beauty holds immense power, alongside intelligence, physical strength, and wealth. Throughout history, figures like Helen of Troy, Cleopatra, and Yang Guifei have gained renown due to their beauty. The significance of beauty is evident in Blaise Pascal's famous remark,

"Cleopatra's nose: had it been shorter, the whole aspect of the world would have been altered"

(from Pascal's *Pensées* section 162, published in 1958 by E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc. All rights reserved).

In the pursuit of beauty's power, the fashion industry emerged, makeup became popularized, and even plastic surgery has become commonplace in modern times. Simultaneously, the widespread use of social media has led to the common practice of taking portraits and videos, editing them to ideal standards using various applications, and sharing them with countless individuals.

I believe that the global proliferation of the modern aesthetic value, particularly the Japanese concept of "Mori" technology, plays a significant role. Young Japanese individuals pioneered the use of this technology, spreading it worldwide.

From a cultural anthropology perspective, examining the ways in which aesthetic values shape human bodies reveals three main categories: ornamentation, restraint, and deficiency.

- 1)"Decoration" involves temporary alterations under the skin, such as fashion, makeup, Mori technology, tattooing, and cosmetic surgery.
- 2)"Restraint" encompasses long-term modifications, such as foot binding in China, corsets in Western countries, brass neck coils in Myanmar, and artificial cranial deformation practices observed in various continents in the past.
- 3)"Excision" refers to the removal of body parts, seen in practices like circumcision, tooth extraction, and epilation.

These practices are not confined to the past; they continue to influence human society today, albeit in different forms and contexts.



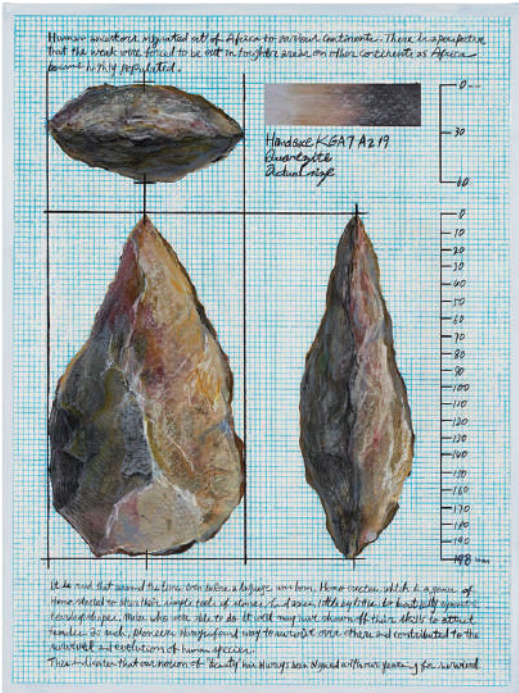
"The Unfashionable Human Body" by Bernard Rudofsky

In the future, no one knows what will happen. However, I believe that by forming hypotheses based on research, we can discover new values and possibilities. To hypothesize what the future concept of beauty might be, I considered various conditions one by one.

Firstly, I focused on the environment, envisioning a future Earth undergoing warming, drying, and an increase in desert areas. Then, contemplating the question of "where beauty stands" and "what is considered beautiful" in such harsh conditions for modern humans, I proposed that "strength as a living being" could emerge as one of the future aesthetic values. The reasoning behind this idea lies in the history of human evolution.

It is believed that human ancestors, born in Africa, migrated to various continents. This migration occurred as weaker individuals were pushed out of groups due to natural selection, forcing them to adapt to harsh environments. In such circumstances, Homo erectus, a species of the Homo genus, began to gradually shape symmetrical and stable tear-shaped tools from simple stones before the advent of language. It is also theorized that males skilled in crafting these tools and sourcing resources might have used them to appeal to females. In this way, pioneers were born from vulnerable species, allowing humanity to evolve and survive. Therefore, it can be speculated that beauty emerged from the strength to live.

Based on the map of the path that humanity would have crossed the continent, explored by explorer Yoshiharu Sekino.

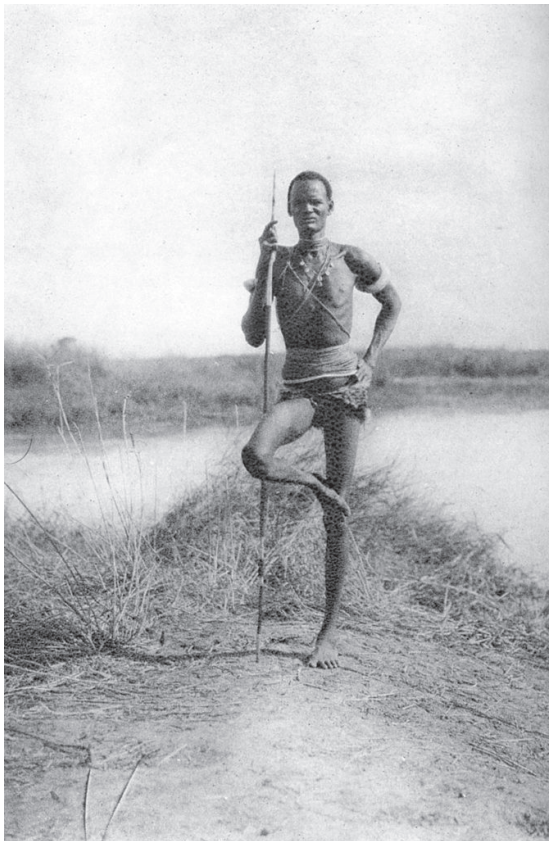


Title : Study of Metamorphose. [About hand axe. 01]  
Year : 2021  
Medium : acrylic, crayon, colored pencil, drawing paper  
Size : W300×H400×D45mm



KGA6-A1 O96/ unifacial trihedral pick  
1.75 million years ago, Konso, Ethiopia





Considering the future Earth environment of warming and harsh conditions, I envisioned an aesthetically strong body with an average height of 180cm, small facial features, slender limbs, and an elongated physique. The background for this concept draws inspiration from animals like bears, deer, rabbits, and foxes, which have different body forms within the same species to adapt to their environments, as seen in Bergmann's and Allen's rules.

In considering the model for the future aesthetic body in humanity, I looked to the Dinka people residing in South Sudan. They are the tallest ethnic group in the world, and individuals from this tribe have given rise to supermodels and basketball players. Their slender body shape, characterized by a long and elongated form, provides a large surface area, enabling them to maintain body temperature even in arid regions. I believe that this physique represents a strong body capable of surviving in harsh environments.

A characteristic Dinka attitude, Terrakekka to Aweil, Sudan, 1925 (1927). Artist: Thomas A Glover  
Photo by The Print Collector/Print Collector/Getty Images.

Based on this, assuming that the body shape aligning with future aesthetic values (Beauty Model) is overall slender and elongated, it is evident that the average physique of Japanese individuals needs to be elongated vertically.



Title : Kaguraoka's X-ray. / Year : 2022/ Medium : Light box, X-ray  
Size : W17.7×H39.3×D3.1 inch



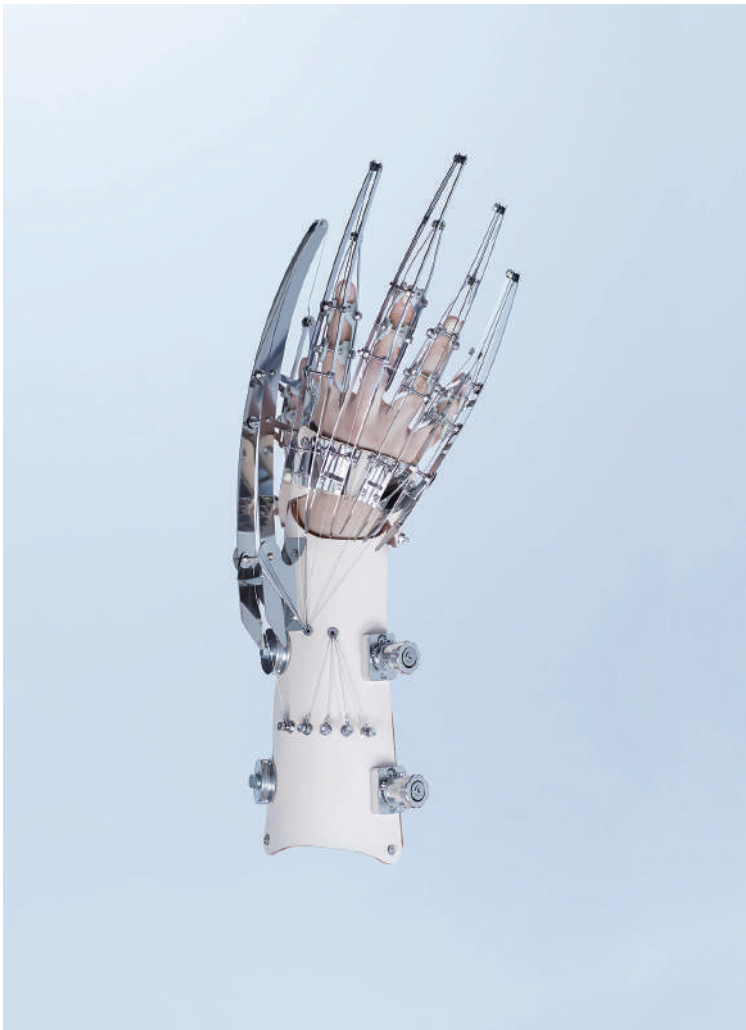
Title : Extended Model's X-ray./ Year : 2022/ Medium : Light box, X-ray  
Size : W17.7×H39.3×D3.1 inch



Title : Face Cage.  
Year : 2021  
Medium : stainless steel, leather  
Dimensions : W15×H15×D12.4 inch



Therefore, the function incorporated in artworks for future aesthetic values utilizes a pulling force, termed "Extended bone." Utilizing this concept, I created artworks (devices) that materialize and form the body of the future: "Extended finger" for elongating fingers and arms, "Ruff to shape the neck" for elongating the neck, and "Prima Leg" for elevating the feet to an ultimate tiptoe position, forming straight legs, and et cetera.



Title : Extended Finger.  
Year : 2019  
Medium : stainless steel, leather  
Dimensions : W11×H21.6×D4 inch



Title : Prima Legs.  
Year : 2019  
Medium : stainless steel, resin  
Dimensions : W6.7×H6.7×D49.2 inch

As our ancestors evolved into humans, humanity is poised to create new aesthetic values with newfound technologies and materials in the future. In an era of advancing technology and increasing human diversity, the enduring desire and pursuit of unchanging beauty reflect the strength of the human spirit. Through my research, I have come to believe that this humorous pursuit of beauty is quintessentially human, raising profound questions about what it means to be human and what beauty truly entails.

I aim to challenge viewers with profound questions about humanity and beauty through this artwork. And simultaneously, I believe this creation serves as a gateway to a new future, free from conventional constraints, embodying the potential to transform existing perspectives and values.



Kitagawa Utamaro  
Title: Three Beauties of the Kwansei Period  
Period: Edo period (1615–1868)  
Date: ca. 1791  
Collection : The Metropolitan Museum of Art



Cover of “ViVi”  
Japanese fashion magazine (2020)

My artwork revolves around the concept that the body serves as a tool for engaging with the world. The current series I'm working on is titled "The Metamorphoses of Beautiful Bodies," exploring the question of "What is a beautiful body?" This theme delves into the intricate relationship between aesthetic values and the human body.

The catalyst for exploring this theme was my own insecurity about my appearance. As a child, I admired anime characters who had small faces, slender and tall bodies, blonde hair, and big eyes. During my teenage years, I noticed that fashion magazines often featured mixed-race models who had appearances that were distinct from the typical Japanese look. Simultaneously, I observed that the mannequins in department stores portrayed slender figures reminiscent of supermodels rather than representing the body types of the store's main clientele, who were Japanese. This dissonance led me to question the origins of aesthetic values and how they evolve. Some of my high school classmates even underwent cosmetic surgery, altering the size of their eyes to fit a perceived standard of beauty. This experience intensified my curiosity about the origins, reasons, and transformations off aesthetic ideals.

Through extensive research into fashion, folk costumes, culture, religion, and historical contexts across various countries, I discovered that diverse body shapes emerged, often disregarding the body's inherent identity. Despite the diverse backgrounds, I realized that underlying these variations were distinct aesthetic values.



Title : Plaster cast to form a beautiful nose. / Year : 2016 / Medium : photo/stain steel, 3D print, carbon



Title : Plaster cast for model walking. / Year : 2016 / Medium : photo/stain steel, 3D print







“The World Map of Metamorphoses of Beautiful Bodies.” (2023)

In the realm of smartphone applications, various methods such as retouching, plastic surgery, hair removal, body shaping, hairstyling, fashion, accessories, corsets, foot binding, tattoos, piercings, tooth extraction, circumcision, and more, have been employed to achieve a particular aesthetic standard. This proactive alteration of the body, aiming to meet certain beauty criteria, has been a prevalent practice throughout the history of humankind, spanning different cultures and eras around the world.

I have categorized these practices into three main aspects: decoration, restraint, and modification, and compiled the research findings into a global map. The archival materials used for this study were borrowed from art museums and cultural institutions outside the country. Images depicting body modifications performed historically or even in contemporary contexts were arranged based on their respective continents and countries.

Upon observing these arrangements, it becomes apparent that similar modifications are practiced on specific body parts across different regions, and similarities in patterns and designs are also noticeable. From this observation, I speculate that there might be an inherent aesthetic consciousness embedded within the DNA of humanity.





Title : Extended Body.

Year : 2022

Medium : Mixed media

Size : W19.7×H39.4×D15.7 inch



Title : Ruff to shape the neck.  
Year : 2021  
Medium : stainless steel  
Size : W15.7×H15.7×D3.1 – 6 inch



Title : Extended Finger -noo2  
Year : 2022  
Medium : Mixed media  
Size : W7.8×H41×D6 inch





Title : Prima Legs. [ right & left ]  
Year : 2022  
Medium : stainless steel, resin  
Size : W9.8×H71×D17.7 inch





Title : Study of Face Cage -What is Anti-age?

Year : 2022

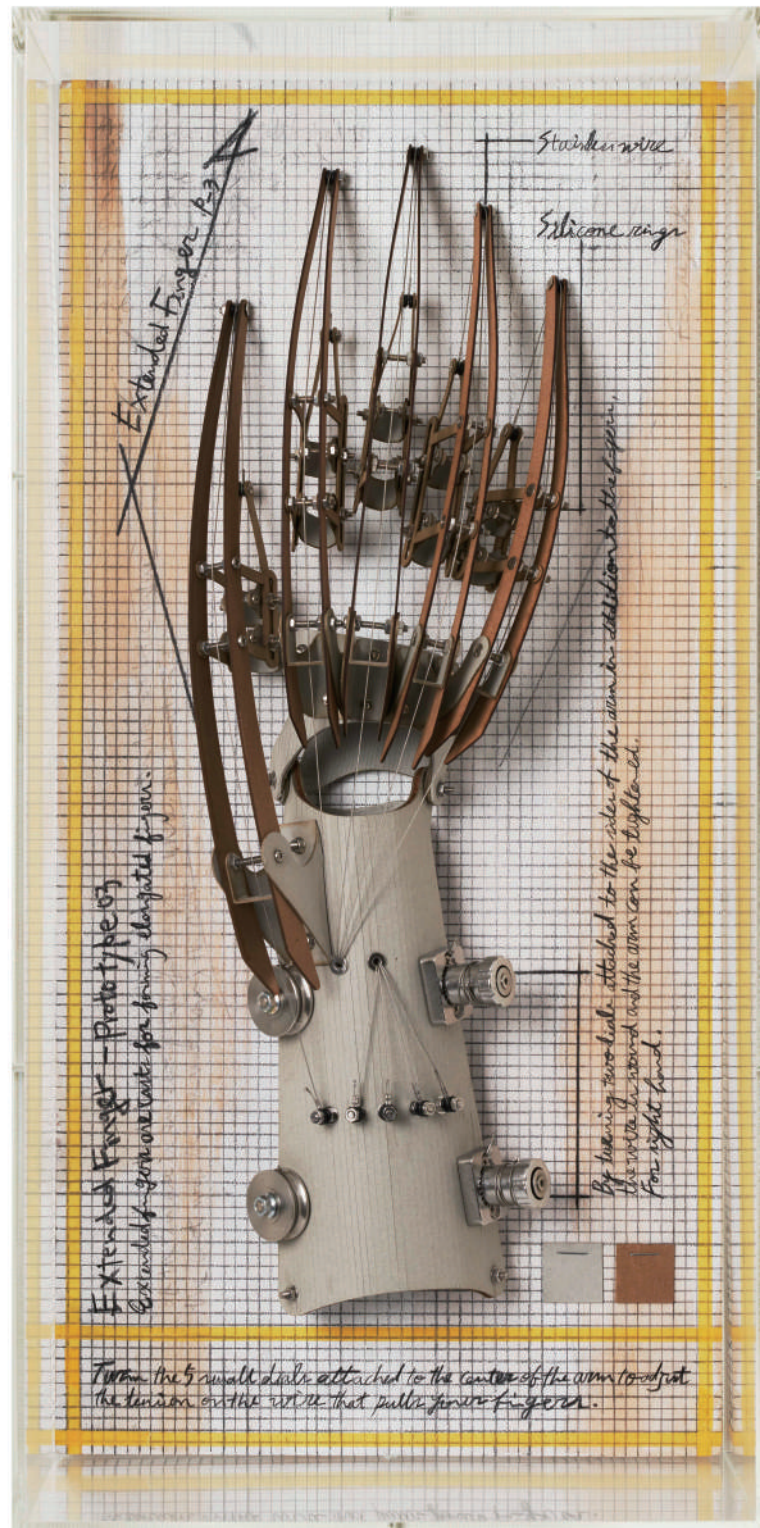
Medium : Mixed media

Size : W12.1xH16.3xD1.6 inch

technical requirements : drawing and collage

This drawing is a study and an instruction manual for "Face Cage."

It depicts the functions of "Face Cage." and the background of why this work was created.



Title : Prototype of Extender finger no.1  
 Year : 2019  
 Medium : paper, stainless steel  
 Size : W11xH21.6xD4.3 inch





"KUMI KAGURAOKA solo Exhibition The Metamorphoses of Beautiful Bodies.  
-Consideration about the aesthetic value of the future body." SEIBU SHIBUYA / Tokyo (2022)





"KUMI KAGURAOKA solo Exhibition The Metamorphoses of Beautiful Bodies.  
 -Consideration about the aesthetic value of the future body." SEIBU SHIBUYA / Tokyo (2022)  
 in SEIBU SHIBUYA shop window.



## commentary

Shin Takeuchi

Collector, CTO, Director of Vision Inc.

An artist who creates works under the theme of “The Metamorphosis of Beautiful Bodies”.

She images and produces tools to get the aesthetic value that humanity has been seeking. In addition, not only the completed work itself but also the prototype of the work is made into works.

I myself work as an engineer to create products from scratch, so it's no exaggeration to say she made me aware of the “beauty” in the process. Approximately, the process of prototyping is the act of almost one creator imagining a completed form, making that image a model and be brought it into reality. During this making, the design document will be brushed up again and again, while being sandwiched between “dreamy images” and “problems that cannot be realized”.

In other words, a design document in prototyping can be seen as a “dream to challenge the impossible”. And many of the works she creates, such as design documents, are full of beauty despite their incompleteness. As a collector, I hope that many people will see her work, which has the most novelty and uniqueness in contemporary art.

Junya Yamamine

Curator

In 2019, I presented a prize for her artwork “The Metamorphosis of Beautiful Bodies” at “Kyoto University and Goldsmiths, University of London Art Innovation International Symposium 2019” where I served as a judge.

This “The Metamorphosis of Beautiful Bodies” infers the body formed from the present and future “aesthetic values” from the history of human birth and forms its “aesthetic body”. And it is a cynical expression of the contradictory state born of blind pursuit to beauty by humanity. It asks viewers what the aesthetic value is, imprinted by history, culture, religion, gender, etc., and imagines what the future aesthetic body will be for humanity. “The body is a tool to interact with the world through one’s senses.” As an artist, this is her statement regarding artworks.

“Body” is something that everyone can have and share. And it can be approached not only from art but also from aspects such as design, science, history, and culture. To do so, she has been persistently planning and researching and seeking new creations that present a vision to society. She has been conducting research on concepts, materials, and methods of production, and has been discussing with specialists in various fields such as fashion and folklore, not only art. She delves into the vision she presents to society from this researches and has gaining groundwork that presents strong concepts to establish the work. Over the past few years, she has been working on her work while maintaining her vision.

“Beauty” has been an eternal theme in the history of mankind and has been on different histories and cultures all over the world. She conducts research to discover the “aesthetic body” and its factors for various races, using “The Metamorphosis of Beautiful Bodies”. In the future, by conducting research and presenting works not only in Japan but also abroad, she will meet people and cultures with different values and histories and deepen her knowledge. I hope, she will learn more from diverse cultures and aesthetics, lead to the discovery of a new “body” and keep presenting her artworks.

## 竹内真

コレクター、ビジョナル株式会社 取締役 CTO

「美的身体のメタモルフォーゼ」というテーマで作品を生み出しているアーティスト。

人類の美に対して、後天的に挑むための道具をイメージし、製作している中で、その出来上がったプロダクト自体ではなく、その途中経過、プロセスをも作品化している。

私自身がエンジニアとして、プロダクトをゼロから生み出すという活動をしている中、「プロトタイピング」というプロセスの中にある「美しさ」を彼女に気づかせてもらったといっても過言ではありません。おおよそ、プロトタイピングという工程は、1人など、ごく少数の完成形をイメージする創作者がそのイメージを模型として現実に存在させる行為になります。この間にある「夢のようなイメージ」と「実現させがたい問題」に挟まれながら何度も何度も設計書がブラッシュアップされていきます。

つまり、プロトタイピングにおける設計書とは「実現不可能なものに挑む夢」にも見え、彼女が作りだす作品、それも設計書のような作品の数々は未完成にも関わらず、美しさで溢れています。コンテンポラリーとしても一際新しさとユニークさを持つ彼女の作品をぜひ多くの方に観てもらいたいと、いちコレクターとして願っています。

## 山峰潤也

キュレーター

2019年に私が審査員をつとめた“京都大学・ロンドン大学ゴールドスミス校アートサイエンス国際シンポジウム2019”にて神楽岡の「美的身体のメタモルフォーゼ」に賞を贈った。

この「美的身体のメタモルフォーゼ」は人類誕生の歴史から、現在、そして未来の「美的価値」より形成される身体を推測し、その「美的身体」を形成する装置の制作であり、人類の美への盲目的な追求から生まれたパラドックスをシニカルに表現している。それによって鑑賞者に歴史や文化、宗教、ジェンダーなどによって刷り込まれた「美的価値」とは一体何かを問い、そして人類が今後目指す未来の「美的身体」とはどんなものかを想像させる。

神楽岡は「身体とは世界と対話するためのツールである。」をステートメントに、作品の制作を行なっている。

「身体」とは、誰しものが持ち共有し得るものである。そしてそれはアートだけでなく、デザインや科学、歴史や文化などの側面からもアプローチが可能である。神楽岡はそのために、根気強く計画やリサーチし、社会にビジョンを提示する新たなクリエイションを模索してきた。コンセプトや素材や制作手段についてリサーチを重ね、アートに限らずファッションや民俗学など様々な分野の専門家とディスカッションを交してきた。これらのリサーチから社会に提示するビジョンを掘り下げ、作品の骨格として強度ある概念を提示する素地を身につけている。そしてこの数年、そのビジョンを持って作品制作をすることに努めてきた。

「美」とは人類の歴史の中で永遠のテーマとして世界各地で異なる歴史、文化体系の中で語られてきた。神楽岡は「美的身体のメタモルフォーゼ」を活用し、様々な多人種にとっての「美的身体」、そしてその要因を発見するためのリサーチを行う。今後、日本だけではなく国外でリサーチや作品発表を行うことで、異なる価値観、歴史を持つ人々や文化と出会い、その知見を深めていくつもりである。多様な文化と美意識に触れることによって、成熟していった先には、神楽岡が新たな「身体」の発見につながると作品を発表し続けていくことと期待している。