



MOSS
ARTS
CENTER

Friday, February 17, 2023, 7:30 PM

Saturday, February 18, 2023, 2 and 7:30 PM

AKUTAGAWA

Created by Koryū Nishikawa V and Tom Lee

Moss Arts Center
Street and Davis Performance Hall
Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre

 VIRGINIA
TECH

SEASON

at a glance— Spring 2023

Tues., Feb. 28-Wed., March 1, 7:30 PM
Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

Thurs., March 16, 7:30 PM
An Evening with Viet Thanh Nguyen

Fri., March 24, 7:30 PM
Book of Mountains and Seas
Composer and librettist:
Huang Ruo
Director and production design:
Basil Twist

Just Added: Guest Curated
Thursday, March 30-Friday,
March 31, 8 PM
Rissi Palmer

Just Added: Guest Curated
Friday, April 7, 8 PM
Shirlette Ammons

Just Added: Guest Curated
Friday, April 14, 8 PM
Sonny Miles

Sun., April 23, 4 PM
**Opera Roanoke and
Blacksburg Master Chorale**
Benjamin Britten's
War Requiem

Sat., April 29, 7:30 PM
Cécile McLorin Salvant

Hachiōji Kuruma Ningyō, the Koryū Nishikawa Troupe, and Yara Arts Group

AKUTAGAWA

芥川

Created by Koryū Nishikawa V and Tom Lee
Performed by Tom Lee, Koryū Nishikawa V, Yukio Tsuji, and Josh Rice

Master Puppeteer: Koryū Nishikawa V
Production Design and Direction: Tom Lee
Music: Yukio Tsuji
Lighting Design: Jeanette Yew
Projection Design: Chris Carcione
Shadow Puppetry Design and Animation: Linda Wingerter
Puppet Design: Koryū Nishikawa V, Yuko Kikuchi, Linda Wingerter, Tom Lee, and Jaerin Son
Understudy: Chris Ignacio
Calligraphy: Hekiun Oda
Recording and Sound Consultant: Damian Wiseman
Production Translator and Assistant to the Creators: Kanako Hiyama
Tour Lighting Supervisor: Jonathan Cottle
Managing Producer: Anna Okuda

Akutagawa is supported by Arts Council Tokyo, the Osaka Community Foundation/anonymous fund No. 22, and the Japan Foundation.

Development and residency support is provided by the Jim Henson Foundation, New York State Puppet Festival, Chicago International Puppet Theater Festival, and Art Institute of Chicago.

Very special thanks to the following:
Ryūgyoku Nishikawa, Blair Thomas, Sandy Gerding, Virlana Tkacz, Grace Needlman, Averly Sheltraw, Yiwen Wu, Ana Diaz Barriga, Douglas Ward, Brooke Kweicin, Rika Lin, Steve Ducklow, Jonathan Pool, Joshua Hognlund, Evgeni Nudelman, Sion Silva, Nathaniel Harrington, and Sam Emmite



Please be advised that this performance contains reference to suicide.



This engagement of *Akutagawa*, co-created by Koryū Nishikawa V and Tom Lee, is made possible in part through the ArtsCONNECT program of Mid Atlantic Arts with support from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Tickets are available now at the box office and online. See the complete schedule of performances, exhibitions, and engagement activities at artscenter.vt.edu.

Director's Note

I was first introduced to Ryūnosuke Akutagawa through Akira Kurosawa's film, *Rashōmon*, though I only began to understand his influence on Japanese literary history through working with my teacher, Koryū Nishikawa. V. Nishikawa-sensei has been deeply interested in Akutagawa's writings since a young age. One of the strongest resonances of Akutagawa's short and volatile life is the process of artistic creation — a process in which the ecstatic energy of making something new runs headlong into insecurity and self-doubt. The pressures of making work and addiction, which led to Akutagawa's suicide, are present in many creative souls and this is one entry point into the work which we hope to explore.

As puppet artists, Koryū-san and I are tasked with adapting a literary form into a theatrical one, and in the case of puppetry, the forms are quite different. We are interested in the parallels between the writer creating a character on the page and the puppeteer inhabiting the emotional life of a puppet figure. We hope that witnessing the artistic process, beyond the cultural framework of Akutagawa's time and legacy, proves a compelling experience. Trying to adapt any "classic" work, even from the beginning of Japan's modern literary tradition, begs the question, what does this work mean now? Each of the stories we have chosen concerns a character in solitude, forced to deal with their aloneness in starkly different ways. This theme will no doubt be familiar to all of us who have lived through the years of the global pandemic.

The puppets onstage represent both the characters from Akutagawa's stories and the writer himself. In one of the first images of the production, Akutagawa is seated at his writing desk and puts pen to paper. As he does so, Koryū Nishikawa enters and begins to assemble the body parts and costume of a puppet, exposing the technique of building a puppet structure that audiences usually never see. From this image, we try to create the parallel between a writer creating a character through text and a puppeteer creating a puppet for performance. In the final moment of the sequence, Koryū-san adds the puppet head to the figure and the figure becomes alive. Using similar techniques where video projection and live music interact directly with the puppet action onstage, we hope to create a theatre piece that is not merely a representation of a writer's work onstage, but tries to embody the process by which the work is created.

The short stories used in *Akutagawa* have been chosen for two reasons. The first is to tell a chronological story of the writer's path from his early works to one of his last. The second objective is to showcase the particular mindset and emotional underpinnings of each story as they relate to the artist's state of mind. *Rashōmon* (1915) is the first story and touches on themes of

desperation and being pushed to the edge. *Jigokuhen* (*Hell Screen*, 1917) is next, and takes us into the destructive flip-side of an artist's creative output. The third story, *Ryū* (*Dragon*, 1919), shows how human beings can believe in almost anything if they put their minds to it — a funny and foreboding commentary on the current state of our divided politics and the alternate realities available through social media. *Toshishun* (1920), adapted from a Chinese folk story, offers perhaps the most spiritual journey of all the stories and ends on a hopeful note of monastic clarity. Finally, *Kappa* (1926) delves into Akutagawa's mental breakdown and death, probing an alternate underwater world where all our customary social mores are upside down. Through the production, elements of Akutagawa's other writings, including *Haguruma* (*Spinning Gears*, 1927) and *The Spider's Thread* (1917), appear as visual reminders of Akutagawa's world.

Koryū Nishikawa and I are grateful to share in this collaboration with many outstanding artists. Composer Yukio Tsuji is a master multi-genre musician whose sensitivity in accompanying live performance is astounding. Projection designer Chris Carcione is a longtime collaborator, whose gift for creating immersive video environments will fill the storytelling space. Shadow puppet master Linda Wingerter's gorgeous shadow figures and animations help illustrate each story. Josh Rice, gifted puppeteer and performer, is an essential part of devising the movement and puppetry for *Akutagawa*. Finally, lighting designer Jeanette Yew helps tell the story of the piece through her evocative use of light and knowledge of puppetry.

— Tom Lee, Chicago, fall 2022

About Ryūnosuke Akutagawa

Ryūnosuke Akutagawa was born in 1892 in Tokyo and died in Tokyo in 1927 at the age of 35. His professional career spanned only a little over 10 years; nonetheless, he is one of the most internationally acknowledged Japanese novelists, thanks in part to his most recognizable work, *Rashōmon*, through Akira Kurosawa's famous film adaptation.

Since his mother had a mental breakdown shortly after his birth, Akutagawa was adopted by his maternal uncle's family, causing the change of his last name from "Niihara" to "Akutagawa." As a child, Akutagawa was sickly and hypersensitive, but excelled at school and was a voracious reader. He began his literary career while attending Tokyo Imperial University (now the University of Tokyo), where he studied English literature from 1913 to 1916. In 1914, with his classmates, Akutagawa started to run a self-produced magazine, *Shin Shicho*, to which he contributed his novels under a pen name. In 1915 he published the short novel *Rashōmon*. For this novel, Akutagawa first used his real name with legally registered Chinese characters, "Ryūnosuke Akutagawa (芥川龍之介)." The following year's publication, *Hana (The Nose)*, was highly praised by his idol and the renowned author Natsume Soseki, which secured young Akutagawa's career path as a novelist.

After briefly serving as an English teacher for the Naval Engineering College, Akutagawa became a staff novelist at Mainichi Newspaper Osaka in 1919. That same year he married and, in the following year, had his first son. In 1921 the newspaper sent him to China as a reporter. Soon after returning to Japan, he gradually became frail, mentally and physically. Although the pace of his writing didn't slow down, his poor health seemed to affect thematically what he wrote about.

Akutagawa's early stories derived largely from 12th- and 13th-century collections of Japanese tales but retold in the light of modern psychology and in a highly individualistic style, depicting men's egoism. He also wrote several acclaimed pieces on a Christian community in 16th-century Japan. As his health deteriorated, his work often made life and death a central theme. He also started to recount his own life to reflect on his depressed state. Akutagawa's suicide in 1927 came as a shock to the literary world. In 1935, to commemorate his achievements, the Akutagawa Prize was established in Japan to acknowledge the best serious literary story published in a newspaper or magazine by an emerging author. Many past recipients of this prestigious prize have pursued successful careers as novelists, including the Nobel Prize winner Kenzaburo Oe. Akutagawa is one of the most widely translated Japanese writers.

— Yoko Shioya, artistic director, Japan Society, New York City

About Kuruma Ningyō

A form of puppet theatre created by Koryu Nishikawa I in Japan 170 years ago, *kuruma ningyō* gets its name because a puppeteer sits on a *kuruma* (cart) and manipulates a *ningyo* (puppet). While traditional bunraku puppetry requires three puppeteers to manipulate one puppet, *kuruma ningyo* requires only one. Seated on a *kuruma*, a puppeteer can use not only own hands but also own feet to manipulate a puppet. With its feet held on the floor by the puppeteer's feet, a *kuruma ningyo* puppet can create strong, realistic foot movement such as stomping and running around. In addition, *kuruma ningyo* can be performed with human performers and other kinds of puppets in a variety of stage settings. With a boundless potential inspired by ancient innovation, *kuruma ningyo* is a unique and vibrant puppetry tradition.

— Courtesy of the company

About Hachioji Kuruma Ningyo The Koryu Nishikawa Troupe

Located in Hachioji, Tokyo, Hachioji Kuruma Ningyo The Koryu Nishikawa Troupe was established 150 years ago and is currently led by Headmaster Koryu Nishikawa V. In addition to annual performances in Hachioji, Koryu Nishikawa V and the troupe are frequently invited to performing engagements throughout Japan as well as around the world. In January 2022 the troupe was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property by the Japanese government.

— Courtesy of the company

Guest Essay

This essay is part of a series of writings by Virginia Tech faculty, staff, and community members that contextualize Moss Arts Center visiting artist performances.

RYŪUNOSUKE AKUTAGAWA, BUNRAKU-INSPIRED PUPPETRY, AND MY MOTHER

Ryūunosuke Akutagawa (1892-1927), one of my favorite Japanese authors, admired the full, rich landscape of Japanese traditional performing arts. Although many of his masterpieces were adapted for film and theatre by notable directors such as Akira Kurosawa, I am not aware of any instance in which Akutagawa's literature was refashioned as bunraku-inspired puppetry. I am delighted in the fusion between Akutagawa's supersensible, mysterious, and skeptical world of modern human beings with the aesthetic of the traditional bunraku (which originated in Osaka during the Edo period, 1603-1868 — feudal age). For me, this amalgamation of Akutagawa's writings and bunraku-inspired puppetry theatre are deeply personal and particularly timely. They remind me of my childhood, my passage relocating to a foreign country, and the changes that life and death bring to my future. Through this reflection, one person remains fixed in my mind as particularly relevant: my mother.

You see, as I sit here writing this essay, my mother has just passed away (yesterday, on January 2). I was consistently at her bedside during her last days. I have been assembling my thoughts for this essay in my mother's room in Kyoto. My father passed away in March 1995, and every year since that moment I have "commuted" to Japan to visit my mother twice per year during summer and winter breaks (for 28 years). When I visited her last summer, it struck me how weak she had become. Yesterday, my mother ate my ozoni, Japanese traditional New Year's breakfast, mochi, and white miso soup. She said, "*O-i-shi-i* (delicious)" on January 1; her proverbial last supper.

My mother was born in the center of Kyoto City in 1914, and she adored Japanese traditional performing arts (kabuki, noh, and bunraku). In fact, bunraku was her favorite and she periodically treated me to bunraku in Osaka City. My mother especially liked *sewamono* (written by Monzaemon Chikamatsu), which describes the lives of ordinary people, both tragic and cheerful. She also enjoyed *shinjyuu* (love suicide), which portrayed hopeless lovers who cannot marry due to social status or morality and commit suicide so that they might enter heaven together. I could not understand these adult themes at that time. However, I was never disinterested in bunraku performances with my mother. I was mesmerized. The puppets

were beautiful and sophisticated, with delicate, rich expressions. They were effortlessly controlled and manipulated by three puppeteer masters: the neck and right hand by one, left hand by another, and both legs by a third. Their movements were so lively, mysterious, and even sometimes cute and humorous. The master musicians (the *shamisen* and the *tayu*) perform the voices of all the puppets after 10 to 15 years of training. Bunraku was unique; a very different performing art relative to my children's stories, and my favorite part of bunraku was how multiple performers, puppets, puppeteer masters, and musicians collaborated synchronously to create this vivid and powerful sensory experience.

More recently, as a Japanese instructor at Virginia Tech, I exposed my study abroad students to both kabuki and bunraku. Most students seemed apathetic or lethargic during the long kabuki performances. It was difficult to understand the complicated, historical story and there was a language barrier. However, to my delight, the students enjoyed the bunraku performance, expressing their fascination with the visceral aspects of the art (despite the same difficulty in story and language). Bunraku is a special art form, because even if an audience has scarce knowledge of the language or historical context, they can appreciate this traditional 400-year-old performing art. In this way, bunraku is somewhat of a universal language: no matter your age, nationality, culture, or time period, you can feel the expression, emotion, thoughts, sadness, joy, anger, happiness, desperation, and humor of each puppet and can savor the masterful harmony of the artists.

My first encounter with Akutagawa's literature is *Toshishun* and *Kumo no ito* (*Spider's Web*), which I believe every Japanese child has read. From these "children's" stories, I came to know of Akutagawa's wit, paradox, and satire. I could feel Akutagawa's simple, honest, gentle soul... like a boy who is deeply hidden under the armor of intellect. Later, in *Rashōmon*, Akutagawa exposes the ultimate egoism of human beings. This theme continues in his next work, *Hana* (*Nose*), which focuses on the arrogance of an onlooker who revels in the misfortune of others. Akutagawa describes the weakness in human beings who judge the image/appearance of others and refuse to focus on one's true self. Before his suicide, his agony, emptiness, and loneliness in this dark world rings out in *Kappa* and *Haguruma* (*Cogwheel*). Akutagawa sincerely and intellectually addresses the paradox of the socially painted face and one's true struggles. He describes skepticism for the reality of life, society, and human behaviors. In this world, we have to be reserved with others socially and wear masks to cover our true selves. The hell of loneliness continues to open the mouth of the deep hollow within the human heart. Akutagawa cannot be saved by any religion that denies doubt, fear, arrogance, and sensual desire. He doesn't believe any kind of conscience,

Guest Essay, continued

including artistic conscience, but he has only nerve. For him, even politics, business, art, and science are omnivorous enamel that hide this awful life. He says, "if we choose one united idea which is originated from two different ideas and if we examine carefully and closely the touched parts of the two different ideas, we will discover all facts are formed with tremendous lies and falsehood."

And so, as I write this, I cannot help but reflect on Akutagawa's transition from gentle boy to desolate skeptic and how this world is full of both mesmerizing pleasure and great sorrow. Bunraku and bunraku-inspired puppetry, for me, represents that childhood wonder and those joyous adventures with my mother. In her death, I'm reminded of Akutagawa and the sadness that unavoidably finds me. I have now lost both of my parents and I have to start to live in this new, difficult world. With this fear and loneliness, I am standing still in the deep sadness by myself, looking down into an empty hole alone in Kyoto, Japan. Perhaps the medley of Akutagawa's work performed as bunraku-inspired puppetry provides a prophetic message that the joys of life can coexist with the darkness, and that the influence of my mother endures.

Yasuko Kumazawa is an advanced instructor of Japanese in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures, where her principle areas of focus include Japanese literature, art, history, and linguistics. Kumazawa has directed a Virginia Tech summer study abroad course in Japan for the last 12 years and brought the Bunraku Bay Puppet Theater to Virginia Tech in 2019. She received a bachelor's degree from Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan, and a certificate of advance study from Hollins University. Kumazawa received an Excellence in Outreach and International Initiatives Award from Virginia Tech in 2019.

Biographies

KORYŪ NISHIKAWA V, *co-creator and master puppeteer*

Koryū Nishikawa V is the fifth-generation master of Hachiōji Kuruma Ningyō, the Koryū Nishikawa Troupe, a Japanese traditional cart puppet company with a 160-year history. He received training in cart puppetry from his father, Koryū Nishikawa IV, and later in bunraku at the National Bunraku Theater. He is one of a small number of puppeteers who manipulates both types of puppets. Since his international debut at the Congress of the Union Internationale de la Marionette in 1976, he has been invited to more than 40 countries and regions to perform. He received his stage name, Koryū Nishikawa V, in 1996. Koryū-san has collaborated with Japanese and international artists from many backgrounds, in addition to training the next generation of kuruma ningyō puppeteers. His recent work includes *Shank's Mare*, co-created with Tom Lee.

TOM LEE, *co-creator, production design, and direction*

Tom Lee is a puppet artist, designer, and director. His work explores manipulated objects, puppet figures, animation, and miniatures in dialogue with traditional puppetry. Lee grew up in Hawaii and began his career at La MaMa Experimental Theater. His collaboration with Japanese master puppeteer Koryū Nishikawa V, *Shank's Mare*, has toured the U.S., Japan, and France. He appeared as a puppeteer on Broadway in *War Horse*, at the Metropolitan Opera in *Madama Butterfly*, and at Chicago's Lyric Opera in *The Queen of Spades*. He is the recipient of Jim Henson Foundation grant awards for his original puppetry work and is co-director of the Chicago Puppet Studio and Chicago Puppet Lab. Lee teaches puppetry design and performance nationally and internationally. For more information, please visit tomleeprojects.com.

LINDA WINGERTER, *shadow puppetry and animation*

Linda Wingerter is an artist and third generation puppeteer performing, filming, teaching, and building puppets and kinetic art as the Stringpullers Puppet Company in Ithaca, New York. Wingerter attended the Rhode Island School of Design and apprenticed in puppet building and performance with Puppetsweat of New Haven, Connecticut. In 2011 she revived her family's puppet company, The Stringpullers, with *Luna's Sea*, which debuted at the American Museum of Natural History. She has taught puppetry arts at multiple universities, including Yale School of Drama and Cornell University. Wingerter began putting her work on film in 2019 and received a 2021 micro-commission from Heather Henson's Handmade Puppet Dreams film

Biographies, continued

series to produce *Misophonia*, a shadow and paper puppet short film. For more information, please visit stringpullers.com.

JOSH RICE, *puppetry*

Josh Rice is a multidisciplinary artist specializing in puppetry. Rice is the producing artistic director of the New York State Puppet Festival. His puppetry credits include Dan Hurlin's *Demolishing Everything with Amazing Speed*; *Shank's Mare* by Tom Lee and Koryū Nishikawa V; *Petrushka* with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra; *The Scarlet Ibis* (HERE); and Shake on the Lake's puppet-infused *A Christmas Carol* (designer/director). His new work-in-progress, *Kayfabe* — a puppet wrestling entertainment spectacular — is the recipient of a 2023 Jim Henson Foundation Workshop Grant and a 2022 New York State Council on the Arts Individual Artist Grant. Rice received a master of fine arts from Sarah Lawrence College. For more information, please visit joshriceprojects.com.

CHRIS IGNACIO, *understudy*

Chris Ignacio is a puppeteer, producer, and educator currently pursuing a master of fine arts in theatre and interdisciplinary media from Arizona State. Ignacio is a Culture Push fellow and Queens Council on the Arts: Community Engagement Commissioning grantee for his project, *Co-written*, involving collaborative songwriting with young people of color. Ignacio recently worked as a cover puppeteer in *Madama Butterfly* at the Metropolitan Opera and is currently working on a digital puppetry project anchored around the phenomenon of the human voice.

JEANETTE OI-SUK YEW, *lighting design*

Jeanette Oi-Suk Yew is a lighting designer and a puppetry artist. As designer, Yew has worked with Tom Lee on several productions, including *Shank's Mare*. Additionally, she designed for Automata's *Frankenstein*, Torry Bend's *Paper Hat Game and Dreaming*, and Alison Heimstead's *Saint Plays and Hidebound*, both by Erik Ehn. She served as the lighting director for several of Great Small Work's International Toy Theater Festivals. Yew also devises interdisciplinary productions through contemporary puppetry aesthetics and technique. *The New York Times* described her project with Target Margin, *Act 4 of The Iceman Cometh*, as "consistently inventive" and *Are They Edible*, which premiered at La MaMa, as "bold." Yew is the associate arts professor in the drama department at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. For more information, please visit jeanetteyew.com.

CHRIS CARCIONE, *projection design*

Chris Carcione is a theatre artist, arts administrator, and educator. Carcione's work aims to incorporate live and digital media into performance in surprising, interactive, and meaningful ways. As a projection designer and live-feed operator, he has worked on Dan Hurlin's *Demolishing Everything with Amazing Speed*, Sam Gold's *All Vows*, Shayna Strype's *Antrak*, and numerous projects with Tom Lee, including *place(no)place*, *Sounding the Resonant Path*, and *Shank's Mare*, developed with and featuring Koryū Nishikawa V. Carcione is an adjunct professor of theatre at Manhattanville College and Westchester Community College, as well as the managing director of CO/LAB Theater Group. For more information, please visit christopherjarcione.com.

YUKIO TSUJI, *composer*

Yukio Tsuji has been working as a composer and as a performer for more than 200 productions over the years. Yukio worked with Estelle Parsons, Ellen Stewart, Jerome Robbins, Jullie Taymor, Sir Peter Hall, the late John Dexter, Andrei Șerban, Elizabeth Swados, and many other major theatre directors. He has been the house composer/musician at La Mama Experimental Theatre Club in New York for over 25 years, and he performed on Ellen Stewart's famous works, *Medea*, *Electra*, *Trojan Women*, and *Seven*, as well as a countless number of productions since 1980. He composed more than 25 hours of music for Kei Takei's Moving Earth Dance Company alone. He composed and performed on Broadway production *Salome* with Al Pacino, directed by Estelle Parsons, and two more productions with Al Pacino, *Oedipus* and *Father*. Other productions he participated in include *Macbeth* and *Night Over Taos*, directed by Estelle Parsons; the Broadway production *Madama Butterfly*, the music for which he co-arranged and performed; *Transposed Head*, directed by Julie Taymor; the Royal Shakespeare Company's *Tantalus*, directed by Sir Peter Hall, and New York City Ballet's *Watermill*, directed by Jerome Robbins. He also composed and performed on the title music of the movie *Year of the Dragon* and composed music for Shanghai Expo's *Window of the City*. Yukio is a member of New York-based group Sara Galas Band with Sara Galassini.

This is the first performance by Koryū Nishikawa V and Tom Lee at the Moss Arts Center.

Tell Us What You Think!

We'd love your feedback on this performance. If you complete the short survey, you can enter for a chance to win two tickets to *An Evening with Viet Thanh Nguyen* on Thursday, March 16, 2023.



bit.ly/akutagawa-feedback

Engagement Events

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2023

WORKSHOP AT CHRISTIANSBURG MIDDLE SCHOOL

Koryū Nishikawa V led a workshop on *kuruma ningyō* puppetry ("cart puppetry") for middle school students.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2023

WORKSHOP: JAPANESE PUPPETRY

Virginia Tech students in the Japanese House of the Mozaiko international living-learning community and active with the Asian Cultural Engagement Center learned about the history and contemporary practice of *kuruma ningyō* puppetry from the creators of *Akutagawa*.

UNIVERSITY CLASS VISITS

Koryū Nishikawa V and Tom Lee led lecture-demonstrations for six classes in Theatre Arts and the Japanese program in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2023

DISCUSSION WITH TOM LEE AND KORYŪ NISHIKAWA V

The creators of *Akutagawa* speak about their long collaborative relationship and the development of this work.

Special thanks to Nina Ha, Luliia Hoban, Yasuko Kumazawa, Valerie Ransbottom, Jeremy Sather, and Sylvain Simmerman

Go Deeper

Writer Amy Tikkanen describes the short stories of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke as having a "feverish intensity [...] well-suited to their often macabre themes." How do the design elements (e.g., lighting, puppets, etc.) and performance translate that "feverish intensity" to the stage? What do the scenes illustrating Akutagawa's own life contribute to our understanding of his works?

Did You Know?

The Moss Arts Partners (MAPs) are ambassadors and advocates who help advance and guide the mission of the Moss Arts Center, including furthering our development goals and strategies and helping increase community awareness of our programs and impact, through philanthropy, strategic partnerships, and outreach. See page 17 for a full list of our current partners.

In the Galleries

Spring Exhibitions
Through Saturday, April 22



Anne Samat
Follow Your Heart Wholeheartedly 2
Ruth C. Horton Gallery

In her fiber-based reliefs, Malaysian artist Anne Samat meticulously juxtaposes beadwork and traditional South Asian weaving techniques with common items, a project that questions the boundaries of craft and art.

Yanira Collado
Zafa/ A Spellworking of Temporal Geometry
Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery and Sherwood Payne Quillen
'71 Reception Gallery

In the face of inevitable change and displacement, memories find a home in the relic. Yanira Collado explores the ideas of migration, reliquary, and memory through construction and ritual.

▲ Anne Samat; *No Place for Beginners or Sensitive Heart #3*, 2021 (detail); rattan sticks, kitchen and garden utensils, beads, ceramic, metal, and plastic ornaments; 105 x 50 x 6 inches; courtesy of the artist and Marc Straus, New York

K-12 Programs at the Moss



At the Moss Arts Center, we believe that arts experiences are a crucial part of a child's education. We've been dedicated to providing opportunities for children at no cost since we opened in 2013. A wide array of Moss programming and experiences to inspire, engage, and empower students of all ages and backgrounds. This season, we're offering five school-day matinee programs, in-school workshops and performances, and gallery tours with professional artists for learners of all ages. Learn more at bit.ly/moss-k12.

Land Acknowledgement and Labor Recognition

Virginia Tech acknowledges that we live and work on the Tutelo/Monacan People's homeland and we recognize their continued relationships with their lands and waterways. We further acknowledge that legislation and practices like the Morrill Act (1862) enabled the commonwealth of Virginia to finance and found Virginia Tech through the forced removal of Native Nations from their lands, both locally and in western territories.

We understand that honoring Native Peoples without explicit material commitments falls short of our institutional responsibilities. Through sustained, transparent, and meaningful engagement with the Tutelo/Monacan Peoples and other Native Nations, we commit to changing the trajectory of Virginia Tech's history by increasing Indigenous student, staff, and faculty recruitment and retention, diversifying course offerings, and meeting the growing needs of all Virginia tribes and supporting their sovereignty.

We must also recognize that enslaved Black people generated revenue and resources used to establish Virginia Tech and were prohibited from attending until 1953. Through InclusiveVT, the institutional and individual commitment to *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve) in the spirit of community, diversity, and excellence, we commit to advancing a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive community.

Health and Wellness

The Moss Arts Center adheres to the guidelines of the Virginia Department of Health and Virginia Tech in its operations, including protocols for distancing, face coverings, and cleaning and sanitation. Our status may change according to changes in university operating procedures. Find the most up to date information at artscenter.vt.edu/visit.

We ask patrons to do their part in keeping our community healthy. If you feel unwell, please stay home.

Moss Arts Center Staff

Office of the Associate Provost for the Arts

Ruth Waalkes, associate provost for the arts and executive director, Moss Arts Center
Devair Jeffries-Lee, program director, Arts@VirginiaTech
David Ehrlich, outreach fellow for the fine arts
Molly Parker, executive assistant

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Hannah Holbrook, house manager
Jamie Wiggert, box office manager

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Robert Gainer, audio supervisor and associate director of production
Kyle Gavell, lighting supervisor
Laine Goerner, production and rentals manager
Joe Ingram, senior technician, stage and rigging
CJ Jessie, senior technician, lighting
Jackson Stitzer, senior technician, audio/video

Programming

Margaret Lawrence, director of programming
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Jon Catherwood-Ginn, associate director of programming
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Moss Arts Partners

The Moss Arts Partners (MAP) are ambassadors, advocates, and donors serving to advance and guide the mission of the Moss Arts Center. Thanks to our 2022-2023 MAP members for their leadership:

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UP 86

Guest Curator Series

A trio of spring performances curated by North Carolina artist Shirlette Ammons, who is serving as the Moss Arts Center's first independent guest performing arts curator. Ammons brings a new perspective to the center's lineup, creating a focus on Black Southern artists who effortlessly cross genres and revitalize time honored music traditions.

\$15 general admission; \$10 students with ID and youth 18 and under
All performances in the Cube



Thursday, March 30-Friday, March 31, 8 PM

Rissi Palmer

Rissi Palmer's gift lies in reaching across all musical boundaries. While Palmer made her mark in country music, she is equally at home in R&B.



Friday, April 7, 8 PM

Shirlette Ammons

Shirlette Ammons is an expressive poet, musician, emcee, and film creative whose highly collaborative work defies genre.



Friday, April 14, 8 PM

Sonny Miles

Citing gospel, funk, and neo-soul as his biggest influences, Sonny Miles fuses catchy, relatable lyrics with soulful compositions to create a unique sound.

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