

Press Release 02 May, 2024

## Takada Kenzo Chasing Dreams



①View of JUNGLE JAP 1970 photo: Iwata Hiroyuki



②1971-1972 A/W  
◦High Fashion, 1971 October  
photo: Ohnishi Kohei



③1971-1972 A/W  
◦High Fashion, 1971 October  
photo: Ohnishi Kohei



④1971-1972 A/W  
◦SO-EN, 1971 September  
photo: Masubuchi Tatsuo

Takada Kenzo (1939-2020) was one of the first Japanese fashion designers to become established in Paris, where his highly original ideas resulted in the successive creation of countless looks that redefined fashion. After moving to France on his own, Takada established his eponymous brand in Paris in 1970 and soon began attracting attention, earning the title “poet of cotton” for his innovative use of this inexpensive material. He continued to focus on liberating the human form clothing, and went on to design loose, dart-free garments or garments featuring straight-cut kimono sleeves, while he was referred to as “the magician of colours” for the unique way he combined colours and patterns, resulting in numerous works which encapsulated his Japanese sensibility. Takada’s designs effortlessly transcended national boundaries, culture and gender to suggest a new style of clothing that was not dictated by the existing Eurocentric cultural tradition. Even today, his designs are still loved the world over.

This exhibition is the first large-scale solo exhibition since Takada Kenzo’s tragic death in 2020 and will showcase his garments to reveal how Takada’s designs changed over the years. Also included in the exhibition are his paintings which he first began creating as a young child, the reference materials which inspired his ideas, as well as his fashion design sketches. Through this format, the designer’s career will be presented from a number of different perspectives to enable visitors to reflect on the lifelong creative career of Takada Kenzo, the pioneering Japanese designer who made the world his stage.



## Highlights of this Exhibition

### ① Timeline of Takada Kenzo's life

Takada Kenzo, who was born in Himeji City, Hyogo Prefecture, enrolled at Bunka Fashion College in 1958. Dressmaking schools were enjoying a boom after the World War II, and Takada was mentored by Koike Chie. In 1960 Takada was awarded the 8<sup>th</sup> the Soen Award, the gateway to success for young designer, marking his first step in becoming a fashion designer. After travelling to France, he established his own brand in 1970 and remained at the forefront of fashion, his popularity unabated, until he left the KENZO brand in 1999. Even after this, and into the 2000s, Takada continued to be involved in creative projects, including designing the official uniform for the Japanese team at the Athens Olympics in 2004 and designing the costumes for Opera *Madame Butterfly*, directed by Miyamoto Amon in 2019.

This section introduces Takada's fascinating life, covering his early childhood, his student days at Bunka Fashion College in Tokyo, his career success after arriving in Paris, and his creative pursuits in his later years, while incorporating anecdotes that depict and convey the person and character that was Takada Kenzo.

### ② Carefully selected "old KENZO" garments from local and international collections

The first half of this section begins with Takada's noteworthy design which was awarded the Soen Award, and goes on to focus on such as his early designs using "Japanese fabric", or fabrics such as knits and tweed, techniques such as the "balloon", or the themes and looks Takada presented during the 1970s "anti-couture", "peasant look" and "military look". The second half of this section showcases the designer's folklore designs from 1970s to 1980s which were inspired by ethnic costumes from around the world—including Japan, China, Rumania, Russia and Africa—and which are synonymous with Takada the designer. This will be a space in which visitors can engage in Takada Kenzo's world, a world that was already informed by diversity and inclusivity.

A digital version of the film of "30ans", the ultimate collection and a culmination of the KENZO brand, will be screened in digest format.

### ③ Wedding Dress created with ribbons collected over 20 years

*The robe de mariée* (wedding dress) which appeared in the autumn-winter 1982 show is a masterpiece created by Takada using ribbons which the designer had collected over 20 years. This dress features beautiful, multi-coloured ribbons embroidered with flowers, and was worn by leading Japanese model Yamaguchi Sayoko in the "30ans" show held in 1999. This wedding dress, together with photographs of the garment being created, will also be included in this exhibition.



⑤1972 S/S  
©SO-EN, 1972 March  
photo: Iwata Hiroyuki



⑥1971-1972 A/W  
©SO-EN, 1972 January  
photo: Iwata Hiroyuki



⑦1982-1983 A/W ©RICHARD HAUGHTON

## Takada Kenzo - Biography



©Takada Kenzo 2016 The Mainichi Newspapers

Born in 1939 in Himeji City, Hyogo Prefecture. Enrolled in Bunka Fashion College and in 1960 was awarded the 8<sup>th</sup> the Soen Award, the gateway to success for young designers. In 1970, five years after his move to France, he established his own brand in Paris. He achieved instant recognition with his free-spirited and colourful designs and soon became one of the world's leading designers. Even after leaving the KENZO brand in 1999, Takada continued his creative pursuits, collaborating with corporations, designing opera costumes, and establishing a new brand. He died in 2020 at age 81.

Recipient of multiple awards, including:

1984 Received the French award of Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

1985 Received 3<sup>rd</sup> Mainichi Fashion Grand Prix.

1998 Received the French award of Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

1999 Received the Medal with Purple Ribbon.

2016 Received the French award of Chevalier de La Légion d'honneur.

## Takada Kenzo : Chasing Dreams

Period	Saturday, 6 July - Monday, 16 September, 2024 *62days *Press preview: Friday, 5 July, 2024
Venue	Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery
Opening hour	11:00 - 19:00 (Last admission at 18:30)
Closed on	Mondays (Tuesday if the Monday is a public holiday), 4 August (Sunday, maintenance)
Admission	adults 1600 [1400] yen, university and high school students 1000 [800] yen, free for junior high and under
Advance tickets	adults 1400 yen, university and high school students 800 yen Advance tickets are on sale from 1 May to 5 July at e-tix online ticket service. Buy tickets at e-tix online ticket service: <a href="https://www.e-tix.jp/takadakenzo/">https://www.e-tix.jp/takadakenzo/</a>
Organisers	Tokyo Opera City Cultural Foundation, The Mainichi Newspapers Co.,Ltd., Japan Arts Council, Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan
Special Sponsor	NTT UD REIT Investment Corporation
Sponsors	Seibi Holdings Co., Ltd., Dai Nippon Printing Co., Ltd. (DNP), Daiwa House Industry Co., Ltd.
Supported	Embassy of France in Japan / Institut français du Japon, TBS GLOWDIA, INC.
Special Cooperation	Bunka Gakuen Fashion Resource Center, KENZO PARIS
Cooperation	Japan Airlines Co., Ltd.

\*Rates include admission to *From the Terada Collection 080 Neighbouring Mystery* and *project N 95 Taguchi Kaoru*.

\*Rates in brackets indicate discount.

\*Free for person with disability certificate along with an attendant.

\*Only one concession or discount can be applied at a time.

\*Nonrefundable.

### ■Inquiries

Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery 【Curator】 Fukushima Sunao 【Press】 Ichikawa Yasuko, Yoshida Akiko  
Tel:03-5353-0756 / Fax:03-5353-0776 / Email:ag-press@toccf.com