

KEIKO ARAI



BIOGRAPHY



KEIKO ARAI

(b. 1963, Tokyo, Japan)

Keiko Arai has devoted her practice to expanding the expressive language of suiboku-ga through a singular, elemental commitment to sumi ink and washi paper. Working monochromatically, she transforms this ancient medium—rooted in over a millennium of East Asian art history—into a site of quiet experimentation and contemporary abstraction. Rather than relying solely on the gestural immediacy traditionally associated with sumi brushwork, Arai often slows the process to an almost meditative pace: saturating paper with ink, masking its surface, and allowing forms to emerge gradually as the pigment dries into organic, unpredictable contours. The resulting works evoke microscopic life, drifting islands, or interior landscapes, balancing spontaneity with patience and control. In other series, her repeated circles recall the Zen enso, yet resist singular finality through rhythm and accumulation. Deeply attuned to the material life of ink itself—its density, gloss, and the breath-like rhythm of grinding and brushing—Arai approaches painting as an embodied act. For her, working with sumi is less about image-making than about presence: an intimate dialogue between hand, paper, water, and soot, where abstraction becomes both spiritual reflection and physical trace.

Keiko Arai is a self-taught ink painter who has exhibited prolifically in Japan, France, and Korea. Arai has completed several public commissions, including fusuma-e (sliding door paintings) for Okamoto Shrine and Otaki Shrine in Fukui, and Hojoji Temple in Chiba, as well as for the Udatu Paper and Craft Museum in Fukui. Deeply committed to the traditional craft of sumi ink, Arai regularly leads workshops to promote its practice and works closely with a community of sumi ink craftsmen in Nara. She lives and works in Chiba, Japan.

CURRICULUM VITAE

KEIKO ARAI

EDUCATION

Toho Gakuen College of Drama and Music, Tokyo, Japan

SOLO EXHIBITION (by selection)

2025 KEIKO ARAI: INKSCAPE, SEIZAN Gallery, New York

Various Colors of Sumi: Exploring the Ink of Nara, Nara Prefectural Museum of Art Gallery, Nara, Japan

Keiko Arai Photo Exhibition: Eternal Sumi of Yamato, Shinbashi Maharoab-kan, Tokyo, Japan

2024 The Embrace of Washi Paper, The Essence of Sumi Ink, Art Lab14, Ciba City Museum of Art, Chiba, Japan

Keiko Arai: Traces of the Heart - Kokoro Ato, Nagoya Takashimaya Art Gallery, Aichi, Japan

2022 Between Black and White - Various Colors of Sumi, Funabashi Andersen Park/ Children's Museum of Art, Chiba, Japan

Keiko Arai: Traces of the Heart - kokoro Ato, Isetan Shinjuku Art Gallery, Tokyo, Japan

2021 Keiko Arai Funabashi Trilogy: Hojoji -Sanbanze -Tamagawa, Funabashi City Gallery, Chiba, Japan

Keiko Arai: INFINITY - One Hundred Shades of Ink, Mitsukoshi Art Gallery, Nagoya Takashimaya Art Gallery, Tokyo and Aichi, Japan

Keiko Arai: INFINITY - One Hundred Shades of Ink, Isetan Shinjuku Art Gallery, Tokyo, Japan

2019 One Hundred Shades of Grey, The Storrier Stearns Japanese Garden, Los Angeles. CA

Various Colors of Sumi Ink: Arai Keiko and Children, The Suiboku Museum Toyama Toyama, Japan

GROUP EXHIBITION (by selection)

2023 The 110th Anniversary of Toko Shinoda's Birth: Creation and Challenge in Contemporary Art – Keiko Arai Exhibition, Isetan Shinjuku Art Gallery, Tokyo, Japan

2022 The 21st Jomon Contemporary Art Exhibition in Funabashi: Gateway to the Jomon Era, Tobinodai Archaeological Museum Chiba, Japan
Exhibition of Toko Shinoda's Works and Selected Contemporary Artists, Genpo-in, Kyoto, Japan

2021 The 20th Jomon Contemporary Art Exhibition in Funabashi – Let's Dive into the Jomon Era, Dialogue with Jomon, Tobinodai Archaeological Museum, Chiba, Japan

2019 SUMI encre japonaise, Centre culturel Les Fosses d'enfer, Saint- Rémy-sur Orne, France

2018 The18th Jomon Contemporary Art Exhibition in Funababshi – Digging into the Art of Jomon Era, Searching for the Legendary Clay Figures, Tobinodai Archaeological Museum, Chiba, Japan
One Hundred Shades of Ink Keiko Arai: New and Then – Carious Colors, Ink Colors, Seki City Shinoda Toko Art Space, Gifu, Japan

2017 The 17th Jomon Contemporary Art Exhibition in Funabashi – Finding Art In the Jomon Era, Tobinodai Archaeological Museum, Chiba, Japan

2016 Contemporary Art Festival Nebula, The Museum of Modern Art, Saitama, Saitama, Japan

2014 SEN 20th Exhibition, Kyoto City Museum of Art, Kyoto, Japan

2012 Material and Expression 2012, Fukui City Museum of Art, Fukui, Japan
SEN 18th Exhibition, Kyoto City Museum of Art, Kyoto, Japan

AWARDS (by selection)

2003 Member's Award, The 41st Funabashi City - City Exhibition

1998 Chairman's Award, Asia Contemporary Art Exhibition

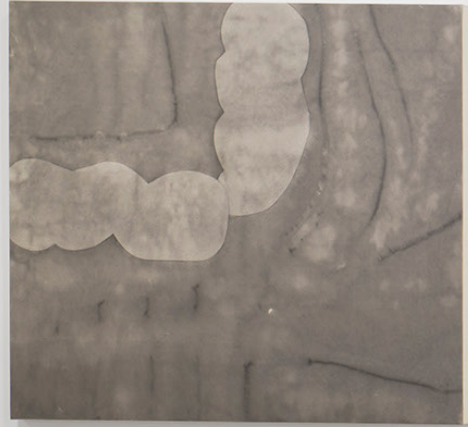
1997 Outstanding prize, Modern Ink Painting Association exhibition
Mayer's Award, The 35th Funabashi city exhibition to celebrate 60th Anniversary of City Establishment



INSTALLATION VIEW OFF: *SPRING GROUP SHOW*
MARCH 19 - MAY 9 2026



INSTALLATION VIEW OFF: *INKSCAPE*
MAY 8 - JUNE 28, 2025



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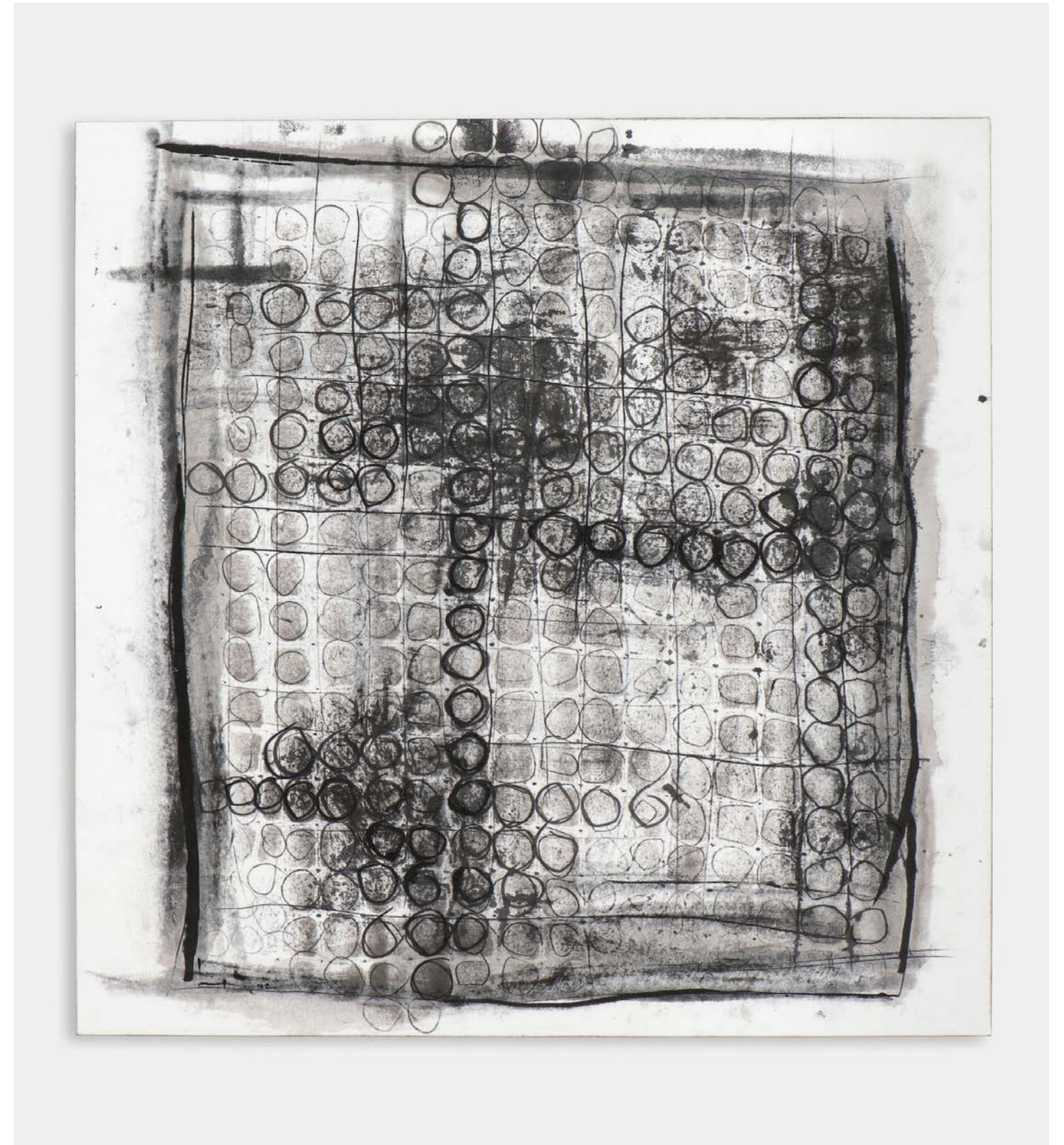
INSTALLATION VIEW OFF: *INKSCAPE*
MAY 8 - JUNE 28, 2025



Keiko Arai
Ancient A, 2019
Sumi ink on washi paper, scroll
52.8 x 25.2 in (134 x 64 cm)



DETAIL
Keiko Arai
Ancient A, 2019
Sumi ink on washi paper, scroll
52.8 x 25.2 in (134 x 64 cm)



Keiko Arai
Now and Then: Loop 1, 2022
Sumi ink on washi paper mounted on wood panel
23.6 x 23.6 x 1.4 in (60 x 60 x 3.5 cm)



DETAIL
Keiko Arai
Now and Then: Loop 1, 2022
Sumi ink on washi paper mounted on wood panel
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For inquiries
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