Japan's first comprehensive bilingual online encyclopedia of Japanese artists
Dictionary of Artists in Japan Officially Launched on March 6, 2024
Provides both domestic and international users with information on artists including exhibitions, bibliographies, and other references

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The National Center for Art Research (NCAR; director: Kataoka Mami), in its role as a national center for art promotion, is pleased to announce the official launch on March 6, 2024, of the **Dictionary of Artists in Japan (DAJ)**, a resource supporting research on Japanese art.
  Site URL: https://artplatform.go.jp/artists

Intended as a comprehensive online encyclopedia supporting research on artists in Japan, DAJ was compiled by the Research Resources Group at NCAR as part of the group's work to serve as an international research center on Japanese art. DAJ builds on and expands the former artist database of SHŪZŌ, a search system for museum collections across Japan, and with the beta period that began last September now over, we are pleased to announce the official launch.

DAJ is focused on artists who have contributed to the development of the arts in Japan, ranging from those active after 1868 to those born before 1996 (which also applies to central figures of artist collectives that are included). Basic facts about the artists include name and aliases, date and place of birth and death, and links to other sources of information. With the official launch, about 1,700 new entries have been added since the beta period began, bringing the total to around 4,200 entries. Information will be added and updated in the future.

To support more in-depth research, entries for about 80 artists feature biographical commentary with contributions from outside writers and more extensive reference information including exhibitions, museum holdings, and bibliographies. These artists were selected because their works are designated as Important Cultural Properties, because they have had solo exhibitions at national museums of art, or because their works are central to the collections of national museums of art, for example. The information is generally provided in Japanese and English. Looking ahead, we will be working steadily to add information on about 20 artists each year starting in FY2024, taking into consideration trends and issues of current interest in Japan and around the world.

Dictionary of Japanese Artists (DAJ) excerpt, showing basic information at left and exhibitions at right, in Japanese and English https://artplatform.go.jp/artists/A1199

In conjunction with this launch, the Art Platform Japan (APJ) website where DAJ is hosted has also been updated. Improvements to menu navigation have made it easier to find artist information as well as existing information on works of art, exhibitions, and galleries. Soon it will also be possible to search multiple databases at once.

Background to the Launch of DAJ

To date, there has been a lack of genuinely useful reference tools on Japanese art for an international audience. Artist information is essential to research on art, yet most biographical dictionaries available in Japan are written in Japanese and tend to focus on the artist without including adequate reference information in bibliographies, exhibition lists, or the like, which hinders further study.

Overseas, this explains the enduring appeal of encyclopedias published in the 1970s and 1980s, such as *A Dictionary of Japanese Artists: Painting, Sculpture, Ceramics, Prints, Lacquer* (1976) and *Bibliographical Dictionary of Japanese Art* (1981). There has been a need for authoritative bilingual biographical dictionaries, complete with reference information, that are designed for the digital era.

NCAR has been compiling just such a comprehensive bilingual encyclopedia on artists in Japan. DAJ is modeled on respected biographical dictionaries including *Benezit Dictionary of Artists* (familiar to many as *Benezit* and now available online, but originally published in 1911), *Artists of the World* (the online successor to *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart,* first published in 1907), and others. Many refinements have been made over the course of development.

NCAR Research Resources Group, in Charge of DAJ Production

The Research Resources Group at NCAR is engaged in activities to compile and disseminate research resources on museum collections across Japan, serving as an international research center.

Japanese Museums Collections Search (SHŪZŌ) Site URL: https://artplatform.go.jp/collections
SHŪZŌ is a searchable database of the collections of museums and galleries across Japan that was originally launched in March 2021 as part of the FY2018–2022 Art Platform Project of the Agency for Cultural Affairs. The database includes modern and contemporary Japanese works. Information supplied by collaborating museums forms the basis of the database, which covers points such as artist name, title of work, year of production, medium, dimensions/duration, and collection. In preparing the database, records were tagged with controlled vocabularies to facilitate searching by artist or museum names, for example, which can be searched in Japanese or English. The database originally included about 70,000 items at 85 museums, and by the time the Independent Administrative Institution National Museum of Art took over this project in April 2022, the total had reached about 143,000 entries. Since then, NCAR has developed a sustainable operating framework and has been collecting and adding data, with the total this month reaching about 300,000 items at nearly 190 museums nationwide.

Media Arts Database (MADB) Site URL: https://mediaarts-db.artmuseums.go.jp
This public database encompasses creative work as well as collections at multiple partner institutions in the four areas of manga, animation, games, and media arts, to pass on this media arts heritage to the next generation.

Initiated as project of the Agency for Cultural Affairs in FY2010 that was intended to establish vital data infrastructure to provide access to media arts and ensure its preservation and utilization, MADB was released in the form of a development version in March 2015 and a beta version in November 2019. NCAR took over the project in FY2023, further expanding MADB features and officially launching the database at 1 p.m. on January 31, 2024.

The Research Resources Group at NCAR also produces research guides for specific purposes, such as learning about artists in Japan or conducting a comprehensive study of works in museum collections. Here, too, group members have referred to similar guides in use overseas. For those seeking such information, whether they are based in Japan or elsewhere, the group strives to provide effective research guides that will help add depth to studies of Japanese art.