# The Art of Succession: Galerie Taménaga

What this fifty-five-year-old Parisian gallery might be able to teach Larry Gagosian

George Nelson 27 October, 2026

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Facade Galerie Tamenaga Paris. Courtesy Galerie Tamenaga.

Succession can be a messy business. HBO's *Succession* may have been overdramatic, but its warring family dynasty drew on real-world power struggles, from the Murdochs to the Redstones. In the artworld, the question is becoming increasingly pressing as top-dog dealer Larry Gagosian, eighty-one, approaches his twilight years. Despite appointing a board to secure his legacy, his plans remain unclear, prompting *Artnet News* columnist Kenny Schachter to declare last year: 'I can reveal [Gagosian's] long speculated upon succession plan: there is none!' How does an empire built around one man's personality survive him?

But accession doesn't have to mean a public battle for control, as Galerie Taménaga demonstrates. A stone's throw from the Grand Palais, where Art Basel Paris played out, the gallery is marking 55 years in the French capital as the family business enters its third generation. Founded by Kiyoshi Taménaga, it now has four spaces across Japan and France, with his grandchildren, Kiyomaru and Ami, steering the ship.

During the fair last week, I popped into the gallery, which is currently showing *Floating Worlds*, a solo exhibition by Kyosuke Tchinaï, , to meet Kiyomaru, the Paris gallery's thirty-three-year-old CEO. Softly spoken and looking younger than his years, he's already thinking in terms of the next half-century. "I look at the business over a 50-year horizon. My grandfather chose five or six artists he liked and worked closely with them for decades, helping them develop their careers. So did my father with his artists. We've inherited those foundations, and now it's about building on them and adding a new chapter of our own."

Kiyoshi founded the business after arriving in Paris from Tokyo in 1957, aged twenty-five, on a propeller plane. The journey took 57 hours. Having written a thesis on Cézanne, he intended to spend a year studying European art. Instead, he stayed, befriending Japanese painters who had settled in France, including Tsuguharu Foujita and Takanori Oguiss. Through them he got access to artists' studios and began taking paintings back to Japan.

He opened his first gallery in Tokyo's Ginza district in 1969, followed by Paris's Avenue Matignon in 1971. Japan's rapid economic growth was creating a new generation of collectors, and Taménaga introduced them to European modernists including Modigliani, Chagall, Soutine and Van Dongen, while cultivating relationships with artists such as Bernard Buffet and Foujita.

That cultural exchange continues but the Paris gallery has developed an identity of its own. Around 60 percent of its clients are French, Kiyomaru told me, with others coming from Belgium, America, the Middle East and elsewhere. Some Japanese artists, he said, are more highly regarded in Paris than in Japan.



Kyosuke Tchinai, Danse des camélias, 116 x 89 cm. Courtesy Galerie Tamenaga.

"Paris has become quite independent from Japan over the past 30 or 40 years," he explained. "There's a fascination with the East here, just as there's a fascination with the West in Japan. The two galleries have developed differently."

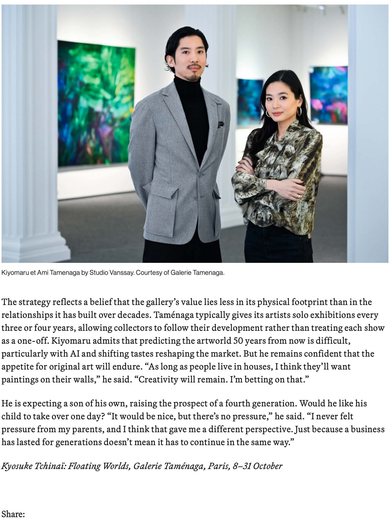
Despite the smooth transition, Kiyomaru's own route into the business was far from predetermined. Born in Paris, he moved to Japan as a child, then attended boarding school in Switzerland before studying hospitality management. Internships in real estate and jewellery failed to inspire him, but a summer job at the gallery proved the turning point.

"I found paintings fascinating because each one has a story behind it," he said. "With artists and artworks, there's always another story to discover. I realised this was what I wanted to do."

He went on to study art history at University College London, followed by a master's degree in the history of art collections and curation. Joining the Paris operation in 2018, he learnt the ropes from a long-serving director, while his father, Tsugu, continued to oversee the Japanese business. Today, Kiyomaru runs Paris alongside Ami, whose strengths complement his own.

"I'm comfortable meeting people and building relationships, while my sister is better at keeping track of the details," he said. "More importantly, we share the same objective. We want the gallery to do well, our artists to have room to grow and our collectors to be happy."

The family has also become more selective about art fairs, scaling back international appearances since the pandemic to concentrate on its gallery programme and smaller pop-ups aimed at existing collectors. In a market where visibility can be expensive and tastes change quickly, Kiyomaru believes lasting relationships matter more than constant expansion.



Kiyomaru et Ami Tamenaga by Studio Vanssay. Courtesy of Galerie Tamenaga.

The strategy reflects a belief that the gallery's value lies less in its physical footprint than in the relationships it has built over decades. Taménaga typically gives its artists solo exhibitions every three or four years, allowing collectors to follow their development rather than treating each show as a one-off. Kiyomaru admits that predicting the artworld 50 years from now is difficult, particularly with AI and shifting tastes reshaping the market. But he remains confident that the appetite for original art will endure. "As long as people live in houses, I think they'll want paintings on their walls," he said. "Creativity will remain. I'm betting on that."

He is expecting a son of his own, raising the prospect of a fourth generation. Would he like his child to take over one day? "It would be nice, but there's no pressure," he said. "I never felt pressure from my parents, and I think that gave me a different perspective. Just because a business has lasted for generations doesn't mean it has to continue in the same way."

*Kyosuke Tchinaï: Floating Worlds, Galerie Taménaga, Paris, 8–31 October*

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